The Effectiveness Initiative was undertaken by the Bernard van Leer Foundation in 1999 with the announced purpose of exploring the attributes and the sources of the effectiveness of a small group of early childhood development programmes. Each programme was widely recognised as 'effective' in the broad sense that they were meeting the basic developmental needs and enhancing the health and welfare of young children and their families and had shown a good track record for a minimum of ten years. Teams were put together to observe the programmes close up and talk with personnel and members of the beneficiary populations. After several years of this activity, which included the collection of a great deal of raw data and substantial documentation on the programmes, the teams drafted and submitted reports to the Foundation.

Stories We have Lived, Stories We have Learned has been prepared on the basis of those reports, as well as other documentation created by the teams and the Foundation during the course of the EI exploration. It is solidly grounded on the philosophy that gave rise to the EI: if effectiveness is tied to a programme's impact, then a fruitful approach to the examination of effectiveness would be to provide programme stakeholders with the time, the space and the means to reflect on and give expression to their perspectives and opinions about the programmes. It was felt that the stakeholders alone had satisfactory familiarity with the programmes. They alone knew in fine detail the contexts and impacts of the programmes in terms of the daily lives of their children, their spouses, their neighbours and their communities.

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Robert Zimmermann (editor)

Stories we have lived, Stories we have learned

Bernard van Leer Foundation

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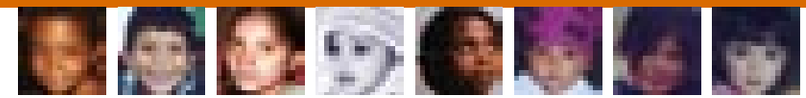
About Early Childhood Development Programmes

Robert Zimmermann (editor)



Bernard van Leer Foundation

Stories we have lived, Stories we have learned

About Early Childhood Development Programmes

A Stock-Taking of the Effectiveness Initiative

Edited with an introduction and additional material
by Robert Zimmermann

Based on explorations carried out for the Bernard van Leer Foundation

About the editor

Robert Zimmermann, the editor of this volume, has been a close collaborator for many years in several series of publications for the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in Florence, Italy. He has also worked as writer and editor for UNICEF offices in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, for non-governmental organisations in North America which specialise in issues related to the health and well-being of children and for the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the United Nations University-World Institute for Development Economics Research, the World Food Programme and other organisations within the United Nations system.

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This book is respectfully dedicated

to the fond memory of

Glendon P. Nimnicht

Contents

Foreword

This is the first substantial document to be published on the exercise we have come to call the 'Effectiveness Initiative' (EI). This short foreword is intended to whet the reader's appetite, contextualise the EI and, most importantly, encourage the reader to delve into this collection of stories with enthusiasm and abandon.

I am especially conscious of the years of serious commitment that many have devoted to this effort. As I write this Foreword, however, I am primarily reminded of the eagerness, joy and courage with which some 40 of us set out on an open-ended journey to take a frank, qualitative look at what makes enduring, well-reputed early childhood programmes tick.

I had the good fortune to be the director of the Programme Documentation and Communication Department at the Bernard van Leer Foundation when we embarked on this venture. I was therefore deeply involved in the EI from its inception. Since leaving the Foundation in December 1999, I have watched developments from the sidelines and seen the EI, like all complex endeavours, metamorphose. I am grateful for this too rare opportunity to look at the changes in a project that was itself concerned, in part, with the changes in projects over time.

When I first skimmed the manuscript of this book, I was, I will confess, taken aback. No charts? No tables reflecting different lenses or different 'takes'? No timelines? What did I have in front of me? These chapters that summed up longer pieces written by the various EI teams were not what I had expected. This collection of 'stories' was not what I had anticipated.

The reports of the teams had synthesised huge amounts of data from effective early childhood development programmes in Colombia, Honduras, India, Israel, Kenya, Peru, the Philippines and Portugal. The stories contained in the book seemed naturally to stand by themselves and be redolent with the language one associates with the evaluation and monitoring of projects that have been successfully pursuing early childhood development, but where was the analysis? In the fabric of the book, where was the intricate interweaving of the narratives and the distillation of the lessons learned from the main findings of each individual group?

It was only when I reminded myself that I had merely been asked to write a foreword that I realised I had read the book hungrily as a critical reviewer: chalking up perceived mistakes, errors, gaps, lacunae, weaknesses. Inevitably, to my chagrin, I had been somewhat disillusioned. I had mourned what was not there.

I had to take up the book again. This time I was surprised to find that I read with a quickening of interest, then satisfaction, pleasure and delight. In particular, I found myself wondering about the young children, their parents and their caregivers and the way these stories showed how the lives of these people were intertwined.

I understood then that this was a significant part of what the stories were really saying about the evolution and natural history of resilient programmes and people.

The Origins of the EI and its Initial Architects

I must at this point debunk at least one of the myths that seems to have arisen about the EI. It has been suggested that I was the one who first thought of the EI and that I was responsible for its scaffolding. Not quite. I remember at least three people who, long before we even had a name for the initiative, were quite adamant that the Foundation should embark on

an exploration of the effectiveness of early childhood programmes. These three people were Rien van Gendt, at the time executive director of the Foundation, Marjorie Craig Benton, then a Foundation trustee, and Liesbeth Zwitser, still senior advisor to the executive director. Rien was very inspirational; he had a clear idea of what he thought was needed. He charged me with the design and showed a remarkable level of trust (and courage?) by simply letting me get on with it.

Two things were very clear. We were not to regard this as an exercise in the 'evaluation' of the grants or the grantees of the Foundation, and we were to see the exercise primarily as an effort that would benefit the broader early childhood sector. In particular, it was evident that the EI would need to be coordinated and managed by someone who was a highly esteemed early childhood development practitioner, someone who had demonstrated both academic and practical mastery of the field. This person's writing on early childhood development matters needed to be strong and creative, yet sufficiently analytic to command considerable respect in the early childhood development arena: in short, a 'heavyweight'. I asked around and talked to a multitude of people, but only one name kept being spoken.

Fortunately, Judith Evans decided to take on the challenge, and she became the first coordinator of the EI. Frankly, even at this relatively short distance of time, I cannot remember which contribution was mine and which was hers. We became a good team. Her vast repertoire of experience and her contacts, her analytical outlook, her wisdom, her sense of humour and her willingness always seemed to stretch the boundaries and made her a formidable interlocutor.

Together, we established an inner core of individuals who each brought tremendous insight and experience to the group: Subra Anandalakshmy, Caroline Arnold, Kathy Bartlett, Feny de los Angeles-Bautista, Kirk Felsman, Peter Mwaura, Robert G. Myers, J. Leonardo Yánez and, of course, our master facilitator, Tom Lent. This advisory team created the EI's initial embodiment, and from this group came the various EI tools, the analytical framework and the open architecture of the endeavour. The scaffolding was thus a collective enterprise.

Subsequently, the group metamorphosed. Some people, including myself, left the EI, and many others joined and made significant and exciting contributions. The 40 or so people that were in the various country 'teams' all had a hand, as eloquently described by Robert Zimmermann, in sculpting this ambitious, wonderful, complex, amazing project.

Telling Stories and Interpreting Narratives

There have been so many people involved, in fact, that, in the story of the EI, there can be no single text and no single interpretation of what transpired. Indeed, there is no 'true' version or 'false' version because, like the story of the six learned but blind men of 'Indostan' (Hindustan) who had all experienced, each alone, a different physical aspect of the 'Elephant' (one, a foot; another, the trunk, and so on) and who each then, based on this experience, described the creature to their companions with curiously inconsistent results, we have all touched different intellectual and programmatic aspects of the EI. Rather than following their example, who:

'Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceedingly stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!'[1]

we should actually lay the EI experience itself directly alongside the experiences of the eight programmes recounted in this book, for the EI, like these programmes, has metamorphosed in the course of its existence.

The ultimate question is, of course, does all this metamorphosing amount to much more than simple survival or is there something intrinsic about some experiments or undertakings that clearly place them in another league?

I would propose that, to be a good reader of the stories told in this book, one needs to be able to treat them as the folklore of the EI. Since none of these stories is a drama that has been observed from beginning to end by any individual or group, they are now merely part of the way in which a number of early childhood specialists and other stakeholders look out on the world, part of 'their stories' and something very significant in their minds. To contrast one version of events against another in any of these stories is really to miss the point.

Let me try to explain. The stories in this book, including the emerging story of the EI itself, took me back in time, not simply back to the EI and the Bernard van Leer Foundation, but further back to my early childhood. I was lucky enough to be brought up in an extended multicultural family that was extravagant in its athenaeum of master storytellers. I learned early that great storytellers are nearly incapable of telling a tale in precisely the same way twice. Cheek-by-jowl, a unique symphony evolved from their different stories and the varied storytelling traditions upon which they relied. Yes, of course, there were familiar asides and predictable, well-loved episodes, and the stories did, at least sometimes, more or less follow the trajectories they had had in previous expositions. But, more often than not, each story followed multiple paths and had multiple endings in its reincarnations. Indeed, since the stories were told to adults, adolescents, children and infants alike, frequently with complete strangers among those listening in, it was also apparent that the stories had multiple meanings and that the storyteller was deliberately communicating different messages to different people at the same time. These were rich stories, vibrant and complex stories. They pacified and excited us; they befuddled and satisfied us and left us, naturally, wanting more.

To experience a vibrant, multifaceted spoken story and then to see it reduced to the written word is always difficult, and, frankly, on our occasion here, the reader needs to cooperate with the editor and understand that these bare-bones, tightly honed episodes are the unalloyed core. It is up to the reader to bring something of himself or herself to these stories and to accept that, in their purity, stripped of their imbedded context, as they inevitably must be, they represent uniquely adaptable vehicles for varied and, in some instances, contradictory 'meanings'.

These are stories which could be used to make many different statements, and, as is so

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1 From 'The Blind Men and the Elephant, a Hindoo Fable' by John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887), a verse version of a story popular in India, but also in Africa and China. The poem is quoted in its entirety in Ilfeld, Ellen M. (2001), 'Emerging Maps of Effectiveness', *Early Childhood Matters,* No. 99 (October), pages 7-16, Bernard van Leer Foundation: The Hague. The poem continues:

'The Moral:
'So oft in theologic wars,
The disputants, I ween,
Rail on in utter ignorance
Of what each other mean,
And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has seen!'

often true, the potency of these stories lies precisely in the fact that they are compacted or multifaceted 'symbols'.[2] These stories 'have everything'; they provide us with a history of long-lasting, 'successful' metamorphosing programmes that plot the essential importance of leadership, training and funding. They articulate conventional 'truths', for example that the success of projects really revolves around the quality of the people involved and their ability to deal imaginatively and deftly with problems that arise. They are, at the core, testimonies to the need for an ideological and programmatic paradigm that provides direction and focus.

Each story in its own way hints at very valuable lessons about the empowerment of ordinary folk (mainly 'paraprofessional' women) who have been given the gift of the demystification of knowledge. Collectively, they each speak to the reality that any project that develops a more-or-less stable nucleus, has a relevant programmatic focus and ideology and manages to sustain varied resources can achieve significant results. None of these 'truths' or 'lessons' contradicts or diminishes the importance of any of the others. If anything, because multidimensional lessons are derivable from shared narratives, the power of the nine stories in this book is augmented.

Perhaps most telling about these stories and the book as a whole is the fact that, despite the seemingly familiar pitfalls and lovingly cherished conventional wisdoms that are embedded in them, they are truly stories of living programmes that have each battled, lost, endured and been renewed. The programmes each unfold in an interesting, nay, a riveting manner, and they therefore suggest that a difficult and complicated 'history' is itself indicative of success. Perhaps there is a natural selection among stories (and projects) that are worth 'telling' and tales (and projects) worth 'stretching'.

This book offers us a set of narratives about successful, ongoing early childhood programmes, thereby underscoring the importance of unadorned stories without the paraphernalia of the evaluative jargon, precisely because the simple act of 'telling stories' is the principle way we make sense of our context. Stories surround us like the sea, and we are, all of us, adept at interpreting and engaging with them. As Geertz so expressively puts it:

> *'Learning how to swim in such a sea, how to construct stories, understand stories, classify stories, check out stories, see through stories, and use stories to find out how things work or what they come to is what the school and, beyond the school, the whole "culture of education", is, at base, all about. The heart of the matter, what the learner learns whatever the teacher teaches, is "that human beings make sense of the world by telling stories about it, by using the narrative mode for construing reality". Tales are tools, "instrument[s]" of mind on behalf of meaning making.'*[3]

This book has reminded me of the wealthy tapestry of storytelling. It has jolted me back into understanding the unequalled power of raw narrative, and it has rekindled my dormant interest in the understanding of what a successful project looks, feels and smells like. I urge you to delve into these stories quickly and eagerly, but also slowly, luxuriating in the crispness of this particular form of storytelling. Be advised to look for the commonalities, the familiar, well-worn, predictable hooks, as well as the deeper thematic blending, and, in your delving,

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2 Turner, Victor (1974), *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society,* Cornell University Press: Ithaca, NY.

3 Geertz, Clifford (2000), *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics*, Princeton University Press: Princeton. NJ, page 193.

of course keep an eye out for the heroes and heroines of early childhood programmes. The important thing, I think, is that this book requires from the reader an engagement that is proactive and out of the ordinary.

There is, of course, much that could still be revealed and retrieved from the gold mine that is the EI. Given that the exercise itself has been such an intimate learning of how a project metamorphoses, shifts and evolves over time, it offers an exceptional opportunity to look at what may have become a sometimes frustrating, albeit rewarding experience. Yet, even with all these caveats, the impact of the EI upon those involved seems to have been remarkable. Maybe, one day, all the above notwithstanding, we will still get a glimpse of the charts, the comparisons, the 'lessons learned' and the juxtaposition of the different lenses upon each other. What else might we then discover?

May I conclude by wishing you a good read, and may you find in these stories what you know to be an integral aspect of effective programming, and, perhaps more poignantly, may you find plenty of surprises and unexpected turns. And, if I may reword the other Robert Zimmerman (aka Bob Dylan): 'I'll let you tell my story if I can tell yours . . .'[4]

Gerry Salole
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4 Paraphrased from Bob Dylan's song, 'Talkin' World War III Blues', on the album 'The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan' (1963).

Acknowledgements

Stories We have Lived, Stories We have Learned has been prepared mainly on the basis of reports carried out for the Bernard van Leer Foundation by ad hoc teams working directly with the programmes involved in the Effectiveness Initiative (EI). The members of these teams were:

Colombia:	Alejandro Acosta Ayerbe, Marta Arango, Fernando Peñaranda Correa, Robert G. Myers, Arelys Moreno de Yánez
Honduras:	Norma de Sierra, Pedro Aguilar, Liliana Godoy
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Portugal:	Rui d'Espiney, María José Tovar, Paula Nimpuno-Parente, Rosinha Madeira

Arelys Moreno de Yánez, coordinator of the EI, showed great fortitude for this book from beginning to end as an intermediary with the teams, information resource and documentalist, and she has been the sort of dispassionate, but persistent reviewer who can only enrich such an undertaking. Patricia Light-Borsellini, director of the Programme Documentation and Communication Department at the Foundation, contributed many inspired suggestions on numerous parts of the text and gave constant encouragement and unfailing support. Peter Laugharn, executive director of the Foundation, is thanked for his general comments and his patience with the Preface and the Epilogue.

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Stories We have Lived, Stories We have Learned has benefited from the advice and support of numerous additional colleagues at the Foundation. Angela Ernst provided her knowledge of the photos available in the Foundation's archive and her expertise during the selection of the photos and in layout decisions. Sylvia Erwig, head of the Support Services Cluster, contributed her administrative skills during the writing process. Teresa Moreno García and Jan van Dongen are thanked for their input into technical questions about publication and layout.

Finally, mention should be made of Rick Vintges and the people at Homemade Cookies in The Hague, who supplied expertise and exhibited patience during an extended publication process.

The EI has been a long, sometimes difficult, but more often rewarding experience, and

it is appropriate here to name many of those who made this ambitious endeavour possible. Within the Foundation, this included Gerry Salole, who furnished an initial impulse and a motivating force for the EI when he was director of the Programme Documentation and Communication Department, Judith L. Evans, the first coordinator of the EI, who was responsible for much of the way the effort was implemented, J. Leonardo Yánez, who became coordinator when Judith Evans was appointed director of the Programme Documentation and Communication Department, Anne Bergsma who was at the Resource Centre and was a member of the Netherlands EI team, Liana Gertsch, current member of the Editorial Committee and director of the Programme Development and Management Department, Babeth Lefur who was an assistant on the EI and also a member of the EI Advisory Committee and the Netherlands team, Jim Smale and Joanna Bouma, who are editors at the Foundation and who helped on EI-related publications, Tanja van de Linde, a member of the EI Advisory Committee and the EI team in Mozambique, and Rien van Gendt, who was the Foundation's executive director when the EI proposal was adopted and who is now the executive director of the van Leer Group Foundation.

'Outsiders' who played key roles in the EI included Kathy Bartlett of the Aga Khan Foundation, who wore several hats within the EI, Ellen M. Ilfeld, who participated in numerous important ways, Eileen Kane, an independent consultant, Tom Lent, a 'facilitator' during several EI meetings, Michelle Poulton and Ghassan Rubeiz of Christian Children's Fund, and Joyce Wolf, who assisted in data analysis.

Many others, though here unnamed, have given selflessly to the Effectiveness Initiative or to this publication and likewise deserve thanks.

As this book was about to go to press, we learned of the death of Glendon P. Nimnicht (on 6 September). Doctor Nimnicht is a model of the individual who dedicates his existence generously to children and to community development. With his life, he has demonstrated that good neighbourliness can be the basis for all social relations. He is missed by children in Colombia and elsewhere and by friends throughout the world.

Robert Zimmermann

Preface

I would like to thank all those who contributed time and commitment to the effort described in these pages. Without their participation, this book would not have been possible.

The Effectiveness Initiative (EI) was undertaken by the Bernard van Leer Foundation in 1999 with the announced purpose of exploring the attributes and the sources of effectiveness in early childhood development programmes. Each of the small group of programmes selected for the exploration was widely recognised as 'effective' in the broad sense that it was meeting basic developmental needs and enhancing the welfare of young children and their families and had already shown a good track record for a minimum of ten years. Teams were put together to observe the programmes close up and talk with personnel and members of the beneficiary populations. After several years of this activity, which included the collection of a great deal of raw data and substantial documentation on the programmes, the teams drafted and submitted reports to the Foundation.[1] The reports are summarised in this book.

The initial concepts and structures of the EI are outlined in the Introduction. If effectiveness is unmistakably tied to programme impact and the satisfaction of the expressed needs of programme constituents, it seemed to follow that the EI should focus on the many stakeholders and their impressions of the outcomes of the programmes. The EI exploration was therefore to revolve principally around the provision of sufficient space to stakeholders so they could reflect on and communicate their perspectives and opinions about the programmes. The idea of those within the Foundation who accounted for the initial impetus was that only in this way could the EI gain real insight into the reasons for the effectiveness of the programmes.[2] It was felt that the stakeholders alone had satisfactory familiarity with the programmes. They alone knew in fine detail the contexts and impacts of the programmes in terms of the daily lives of their children, their spouses, their neighbours and their communities.

It was important to engage the active, meaningful participation of all stakeholders, including children and their families and the people involved with the organisations that funded and managed the programmes, but also other community members who were not directly targeted by the programmes. The challenge facing the EI facilitators, whether in the field or at the Foundation, was thus to help the stakeholders to engage in a collective attempt to construct an understanding of effectiveness.

However, merely by asking a stakeholder why a programme is effective, the EI would not necessarily learn how the programmes functioned, whether or under which circumstances and constraints they were effective, or the sorts of outcomes that might determine effectiveness. Moreover, most of the stakeholders could not be expected to be conversant in the nuances involved in the methodological choices represented by the programmes.

For this reason, the EI enquiry was to possess an orientation loosely grounded on an entire era of investigations carried out from the 1940s to our day and based on the study of 'social

1 The website of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, <*www.bernardvanleer.org*>, contains links to relevant documentation. See the bibliography for more information.

2 Gerry Salole, former director of the Programme Documentation and Communication Department of the Foundation, was instrumental in conceiving the original proposal, along with Rien van Gendt, at the time executive director of the Foundation, Marjorie Benton, Foundation trustee, and Liesbeth Zwitser, senior advisor to the executive director. Judith L. Evans, the first EI coordinator, was responsible for much of the EI process. J. Leonardo Yánez, as the subsequent EI coordinator, worked alongside Judith Evans when she was appointed director of the Programme Documentation and Communication Department.

systems in action'. EI teams – one per programme – would guide the explorations into the programmes, perform the internal analysis of the EI process and report on outcomes. Each team would consist of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' with respect to the programme. The insiders – people closely tied to the programmes – would supply their experience and knowledge of the local situations, while the outsiders – people not previously involved in the programmes – would raise issues the insiders might take for granted or disregard. The sensitivity of the insiders towards the programme communities and the conceptual abilities of the outsiders were to be combined for the benefit of the explorations.

Potential 'EI tools' were gradually identified that could be employed to tap into the intimate knowledge, spoken or unspoken, that the various stakeholders possessed about the programmes. Some of the tools were traditional, but others had to be more innovative so that the teams could reach all the stakeholders, many of whom might be children, community members who were illiterate or who had limited access to education, or individuals otherwise unable to express themselves in a manner that could be easily understood. Often, people who had difficulty articulating their thoughts appreciated the tools as a roundabout means to discuss their impressions, whether positive or negative.

One very useful tool was the 'project timeline', which was a set of questions that provided a path for the EI teams to arrive at portraits of the programmes through the stakeholders: the origins of the programmes, profiles of the programme actors and significant events in the history of the programmes.

The project timeline was eventually inserted into the EI 'analytical' framework. I have placed inverted commas around this term so as to emphasise that the framework was not analytical in the scientific sense. Rather than a scientific research agenda on effectiveness, the framework consisted of groups of questions that were proposed as a point of departure for an exploration into (an 'analysis' of) the programmes. Besides the timeline, the framework encompassed queries on many other programme elements, including the management structure and organisational culture of the programmes, the nature and content of programme interventions and the views of the stakeholders about programme goals.

The analytical framework and other components in the overall EI approach were proposed to the teams as aids in their investigations, but the teams were free to apply them or not. Thus, the EI tools were not all implemented by all the teams, and many of the tools used by the teams had been discovered or adapted individually by them. (Actually, many of the tools were singled out only as the EI progressed.) Because the programmes selected for the EI were geographically and structurally different and targeted unique groups through a variety of approaches, each team was encouraged, in fact, to define the core functions of the EI within the specific programme, design its own process of investigation and embrace or create methods that would facilitate participation and be relevant within the context of the programme. It was expected only that the teams, according to their own lights, would enquire among the stakeholders, gain insights into the complexity of the programme experiences, weigh programme impacts, document the EI process and report on findings to the Foundation.

Besides the project timelines, the tools applied by the teams included interviews, workshops, the recording of anecdotes and stories relating to the programmes, the use of analogies and pictures to plumb the opinions of stakeholders, and observations of programme activities by team members. The task was rendered a little easier if the teams relied on discussions with the stakeholders themselves to analyse and organise the information they had gathered. By thus taking what had been discovered back to the people who had generated the information,

the teams hoped to stimulate further dialogue and ensure that the stakeholders had been understood correctly.

Because each of the teams was allowed great freedom in the design and implementation of its enquiry, the reports supplied by the teams to the Foundation vary enormously in format and the topics examined. This is evident in the condensed versions of the reports that follow the introduction (Chapters 1 through 8). The variety has generated an advantage. By being so distinctive, each report highlights different aspects of the EI exploration, and, taken together, the reports offer a more thorough picture of the EI process than might have been the case had the teams been asked to follow a standard report outline.

The descriptions furnished in the main introduction and the eight programme chapters also make clear that the EI process was quite open. There seems to be a relationship between this openness and the candour of the reports. The candour is sometimes quite engaging. With a few strokes, the report writers could have easily painted out any sign of controversy or criticism involving the programmes. Instead, they frequently presented, often without comment or counterargument, negative statements by stakeholders about the programmes. Moreover, some of the report writers criticise their own programmes.

'Why shouldn't they be candid?', you might well ask. They should have been, of course, but many people might not have been. Many of the authors were programme 'insiders' and therefore had stronger loyalties to the programmes than they did to the Foundation. When questioned subsequently about negative statements by stakeholders, they sometimes showed great passion in defending the programmes against the opposing views.

Nonetheless, by allowing an unencumbered stage for criticism, including even their own criticism, the writers demonstrated a remarkable objectivity. They have thereby permitted others to learn from the criticism, which was often constructive. They also, by the way, help establish their own credibility. This reminds us that a lot of progress can be achieved in any programme if there is a willingness to address difficulties, admit to, assess and profit from criticism and learn from mistakes.

Chapter 9 proposes a consideration of relevant features of the EI that were highlighted through the greater comprehension facilitated by contact with the process and by the reports. For instance, by employing the EI tools intensively and regularly, several of the teams ended by transferring the tools to the programmes, thereby allowing the programmes to rely on the tools for communication among stakeholders and for feedback in programme monitoring and evaluation.

The potential of the space for reflection supplied by the EI to the stakeholders was not fully grasped at the beginning. Stakeholders often mentioned that the EI provided them with plenty of room to examine their opinions and perceptions and to reach a deeper understanding of their experiences within the programmes. The spaces for reflection afforded programme beneficiaries, staff, other stakeholders and other community members opportunities to become more aware of their needs and contribute more well informed action to their communities. Frequently, because of the EI, the stakeholders found new energy, and their participation became more active and more beneficial for the programmes and for themselves.

The Bernard van Leer Foundation could have continued to promote the evolution of the EI process. However, many ideas had emerged, and there was a compelling feeling within the Foundation that one should look back to see what had been learned. It was therefore decided to produce an historical record so as to take stock of the EI and offer a reference for those who had taken part and for others who might be interested.

The main consideration at the outset in this regard was that the search for the features of effectiveness based on an exploration of programmes widely considered successful would necessarily be limited by the conditions and the environments specific to each programme. Any separation of the sources and attributes of effectiveness out of the programme contexts would be difficult. These contexts, as well as the variety of the experiences gained during the implementation of the EI, would therefore represent the background before which any translation of the vast amount of testimony gathered during the course of the EI into reasonable general statements about effectiveness must occur.

An additional element in this background was the assumptions of the EI actors and the biases of the stakeholders. One premise of the EI exercise had always been that, no matter how 'purist' they may have been in attempting to remain receptive, listen accurately and see truly, the members of the teams and the individuals who had helped design and organise the EI inevitably made assumptions about effectiveness in terms of both theory and practice, and, explicitly or implicitly, consciously or unconsciously, they added these assumptions to the enquiry. Some of these assumptions were announced early on; others were recognised only as more familiarity was gained during the course of the EI exploration. Chapter 9 contains an explanation of several of these assumptions.

Another premise of the EI was that the people who implement early childhood development programmes and the people who are the targets of these programmes may apply 'filters' of varying degrees of subtlety and sophistication when they communicate their impressions or analyse information about their programmes. A couple of these filters are likewise described in Chapter 9.

It was important not to try to telescope the circumstances of the programmes and the contexts that gave rise to them into the uniform grammar of a static, pseudo-universal idiom about effectiveness, and it was important not to allow the biases of the speakers and the assumptions of the recorders to control the ownership of the data, but it was nonetheless important also to make the attempt to translate the words of the stakeholders into a meaningful language about effectiveness so as to round off the EI process. It therefore seemed fitting to speak of the attempt at translation as an effort to 'map the contours' of effectiveness. The aspiration was that the lessons learned across the EI programmes could thus be more easily recast in an open-ended form that could benefit other partners and audiences and, especially, prove more useful for other early childhood development programmes, while remaining true to the EI process and to the authentic voices of the stakeholders.

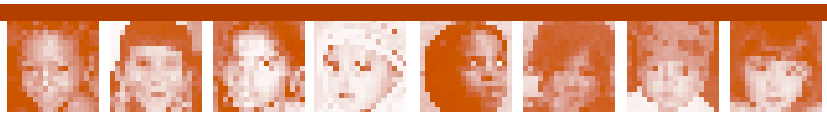
The editor's epilogue is offered in this spirit. It represents an 'outsider's' fresh distillation from the material gathered through the EI by the teams. The ten possible attributes and sources of effectiveness, the two potential spin-offs from effectiveness and many of the statements used to clarify these items have been taken from the reports. The hope is that the reader will not consider these points, general as they may be, as a check-list of universally effective practices. That is not what they are. They are merely a direct sampling of the precise reasons offered by stakeholders and EI team members to explain their perceptions that the early childhood development programmes in which they were involved had been effective.

We have learned a lot for the future. If there were to be another EI, we would likely choose different steps. We recognise that the openness of the process was enormously beneficial, but we also recognise that we might have been able to take more advantage of the promise of this openness. We could have been much more resourceful in the establishment of methodologies to sort through and represent the diverse learning and many context-specific insights into effectiveness so as to sift out information on commonalities that would allow us to compare

the programmes more fruitfully.

These lessons are still fresh. The Bernard van Leer Foundation has a responsibility to address them. We are now, in fact, reconsidering the way we, as an institution, approach research. But that is another story. As it is, the journey we have taken because of the EI has been an extremely rewarding one.

Peter Laugharn
Executive Director
Bernard van Leer Foundation



Introduction: The Effectiveness Initiative

This introduction supplies a brief description of the purposes, the structure and some of the tools of the Effectiveness Initiative as initially conceived. It also includes a list of the participating programmes. See Chapter 9 for a consideration of relevant features of the Effectiveness Initiative that became more apparent as the effort evolved.

The Purposes of the EI

The purpose of the Effectiveness Initiative as originally announced was to discover the 'contours' of the effectiveness of early childhood development programmes that were widely recognised as successful.[1]

> *'I trust that this report will now be used as a tool to campaign for better governmental funding for childcare in India and elsewhere and provide some insights for policy-makers on how childcare run by women themselves can be organised.'*
>
> – Ela R. Bhatt (quoted in Anandalakshmy et al., 2003)

The Bernard van Leer Foundation undertook a three-year project known as the Effectiveness Initiative (EI) in January 1999.[2] The main objective was to examine selected early childhood development programmes, principally through the application of qualitative methods among stakeholders, so as to gain insights into the features that made the programmes effective. In parallel with this exploration, steps were to be taken to initiate and facilitate an international dialogue that would move beyond simple measures and indicators of programme success and foster fundamental qualitative improvements in the planning of early childhood development programmes.

This book represents a part of the endeavour to reach those goals.

The motivation for the EI came from the fact that, because of the Foundation's decades' long experience in funding programmes for young children and their families, increasing numbers of donors seeking to provide money for such programmes were turning to the Foundation for advice. They were asking how they might support the growth and development of young children most efficiently through programmes.

The Foundation realised that the answer depends on a good understanding of the effectiveness of programme design and implementation. However, such an understanding is not readily achieved. There is, for example, the fact that an early childhood development programme might be extremely effective, but only within the special environment for which it has been created. Moreover, the stakeholders in one programme might be particularly motivated to help the programme succeed, while a very similar programme among other stakeholders elsewhere might not benefit from such support, and this may be pivotal. One

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1 Acknowledgement is due for much of the information here and in the following sections to the various articles in Bernard van Leer (2001a).

2 During the process of the definition of the initial EI concepts, the Aga Khan Foundation (<*www.akdn.org*>), Christian Children's Fund (<*www.christianchildrensfund.org*>) and the Community of Learners Foundation (Quezon City, Metro Manila, the Philippines) were consulted about possible participating programmes and the framework for the EI exploration. Along with the Bernard van Leer Foundation, these organisations and others are involved in the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (<*www.ecdgroup.com*>).

programme might be successful in helping children grow and develop because it directly satisfies the needs of the children, while another programme might be successful because, rather than directly targeting children, it satisfies the needs of families, mothers, teachers, doctors, or some other group that can then more directly help children. Effectiveness may sometimes be shaped more by factors external to a programme than by internal factors.

These considerations all mean that the replication of the approach of a successful programme is no guarantee that the accomplishments of the programme will be duplicated.

How was the Foundation to proceed? One solution might be to accept that the question facing the Foundation was a very sweeping one. This question might be phrased as follows: 'What determines the effectiveness of early childhood programmes in a variety of contexts and for diverse participants and stakeholders, ranging from children through parents and community members to policy-makers?'.

However, with such a large question, any features of effectiveness identified might be too broad to be easily applied in individual cases.

Instead, it might also be possible to particularise the question facing the Foundation so that it might not seem so sweeping after all. Rather than speaking of 'defining' effectiveness, one might speak of 'mapping the contours' of effectiveness. One might attempt to understand what supports and what hinders the success of a programme under certain conditions. One might seek to 'describe' effectiveness in terms of specific environments and specific groups. Based on these 'contours', one might then more easily say something meaningful about programme effectiveness in general. The question, in other words, could be open ended.

The Programmes

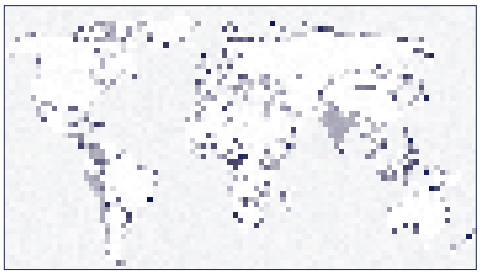
The participating programmes are briefly described.

One trick to the resolution of the dilemma facing the Foundation revolved around the selection criteria for the programmes. The EI programmes were already to be widely recognised as successful, and they were to exhibit a good track record of a minimum of ten years of positive achievement. This would help ensure that the enquiry would have a reasonable chance of highlighting the features of effectiveness.

A quest was undertaken. The Foundation carried out an informal survey among a group of veteran practitioners and acknowledged experts in early childhood development. Around 150 programmes were identified. The number was whittled down. Ultimately, ten likely early childhood development programmes were chosen to join in the exploration, as follows:[3]

- *Programa para el Mejoramiento de la Educación, la Salud y el Ambiente* ('Programme for the Improvement of Education, Health and the Environment'), Colombia. This programme involved an integrated, participatory approach to early childhood development, which also supplied a foundation for community development. Begun in 1978 by the International Centre for Education and Human Development among 100 families in four farming and fishing villages on the Pacific coast of Colombia, it initially focused on training to help mothers become childhood development educators and community leaders. It

3 Note that the ten programmes are located in ten different countries. The ties vary between the Foundation and the organisations responsible for the programmes. Six of the organisations do not currently have a financial relationship with the Foundation (the ones in Colombia, Honduras, Kenya, Peru, the Philippines and Portugal).



eventually came to serve approximately 7,000 families along the coast and in the interior.

- *Madres Guías* ('Guide Mothers'), Honduras. In the early 1990s, the national office of Christian Children's Fund in Honduras undertook a home- and centre-based programme designed to help children make the transition easily from home to pre-school and then to primary school. An important part of the programme is the madres guías, local women who are trained to work with families in the household and with children as they enter pre-school. The programme also runs many other initiatives.
- The *Self Employed Women's Association,* India. Millions of women make up the bulk of the vast informal-sector labour force in India, the poorest of all working people in the country. Relatively few of these women had been unionised before the early 1970s, when the association committed itself to their empowerment and to the creation of independent unions for them. Since the mid-1980s, the association has been organising and operating childcare centres for women in the informal sector who have joined unions.
- The *Association for the Advancement of the Ethiopian Family and Child in Israel.* The association originated in 1985, with the support of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, to assist members of an ancient Jewish community, the Beta Israel, who had immigrated to Israel from Ethiopia and who, in the main, did not speak the languages prevalent in the host country. The association trains workers from the immigrant community, develops educational materials to help maintain the community's unique heritage and educates others about the community. The principal focus of the EI was the innovative community-based, early childhood programmes run by the association.
- The *Madrasa Resource Centres,* Kenya. In 1986, Muslim communities in Mombasa realised that their off-spring were being caught up in a vicious circle of poor education leading to poor jobs and that the root of the problem was inadequate preparation for primary school. Representing a relatively underprivileged segment of the population, the communities turned to the Aga Khan Foundation for support. The solution implemented relies on the Madrasa Resource Centre, which assists in the establishment of pre-schools within local Muslim religious institutions. The pre-schools help children acquire proper groundwork for entry into the regular education system. The inexpensive pre-schools have become popular, and the initiative has since spread to Tanzania and Uganda. The main office in Mombasa provides training and support to the country offices.
- *Associação da Criança Família e Desenvolvimento* ('Association for the Child, Family and Development'), Mozambique. Since 1995, the programme has focused on a variety of community-based activities. These include assistance so that 500 community network groups can coordinate their early childhood development activities.
- *Samenspel* ('Playing Together'), the Netherlands. Samenspel was established in 1989 as a small-scale project to test strategies for reaching immigrant families, primarily from Morocco and Turkey, and to explore ways to encourage mothers with young children to participate in play centres during the afternoons. Training programmes for teams of multi-ethnic play leaders gradually developed. Samenspel groups are active in play groups and community centres and within self-help and immigrant organisations.

- The *Programas no Escolarizados de Educación Inicial* ('Non-Formal Early Education Programmes'), Peru. This pre-school programme started in the late 1960s as a nutrition education project among mothers in poor Aymara- and Quechua-speaking villages in the state of Puno. It was eventually adopted by the Ministry of Education and rapidly evolved into a nationwide community-based non-formal pre-school system.
- The *Pinatubo Family Education Programme,* the Philippines. This programme was initiated among more than 1,000 poor, mostly illiterate Aeta families. These Aetas, an indigenous people speaking their own language, had been displaced from their farms and villages by the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in 1991. The programme includes early childhood care and education, parental education, health care and microenterprise development.
- The *Águeda Movement-Bela Vista,* Portugal. The Águeda Movement began in the mid-1970s with the creation of the Bela Vista pre-school. The movement is aimed at disabled children and children who are socially marginalised. Outreach to raise awareness has led to more inclusive community-based approaches, as well as to efforts to reduce duplication among Portugal's social services and to increase social service access among target children and families.

EI teams and EI structure

The groups and entities formed to carry out the enquiry are described.

It would not do merely to send a single group of EI investigators around to report on their impressions of the reasons for the success of the ten programmes. It was also important to undertake every effort to encourage a diversity of points of view so as to limit the influence of static, uniform concepts of effectiveness and other preconceived notions.

After much deliberation, it was decided that the best approach would be to rely on an independent EI team, one per programme, to direct and guide the exploration of each programme, perform the internal analysis on the EI process and report on outcomes. Every team would consist of at least three or four people who would include 'insiders' and 'outsiders' with respect to the programme. The insiders would supply their experience and knowledge of the programme context, while the outsiders – people not previously involved in the programme or in the organisation responsible for the programme – would raise issues that the insiders might take for granted. Normally, the team leader was to be an outsider.

Numerous consultations and meetings were organised with the programme personnel and the target communities in order to fix the composition of the EI teams. The programme outsiders on the teams were to visit the sites fairly frequently, while the insiders remained with the programmes. In dialogue with the stakeholders, the teams were to determine the focus and the agenda of the EI investigations.

An important part of the infrastructure for the exploration was provided through the EI coordination team, which was based at the Foundation's headquarters in The Hague. The coordination team was to follow the work of the EI teams, try to anticipate needs and supply advice.

The EI was also intended to be a cross-programme, cross-agency collaboration that stimulated on-going dialogue about effective methods. Useful ideas, important techniques in the implementation of the EI and in programme effectiveness, and other key issues and insights were to be discussed periodically at workshops involving the coordination team and the various programme teams. The workshops would additionally serve as opportunities to

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Deliberations...

report on the progress of the EI. Meanwhile, the coordination team was to function as a clearing house for the communication, exchange and diffusion of new learning and practice.

An EI advisory committee was created to act as a consulting entity to provide guidance for the EI. Originally, the advisory committee was composed of early childhood development specialists and practitioners from around the world who had been recruited by the Foundation. It was gradually realised that, thus composed, the committee was not really representative in terms of the programmes and that better ways had to be found to guarantee steady lines of communication within the EI. For this reason, the advisory committee was reorganised during an EI meeting in 2000. It would now consist of individuals selected from among the members of the EI teams. They were to serve as a body of experts on the EI and function as the liaison among the programme teams and between them and the coordination team in The Hague.

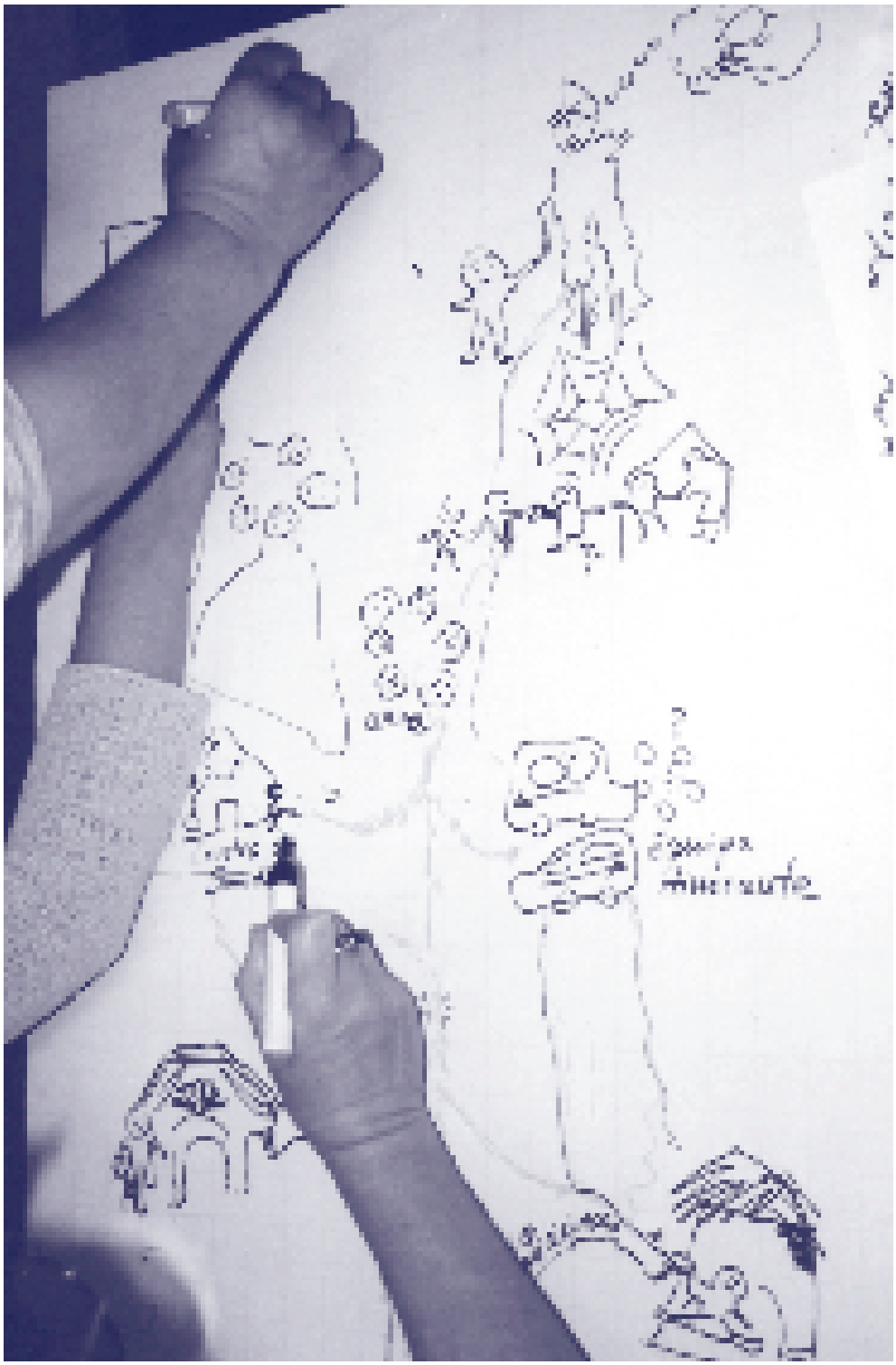
An Analytical Framework

Rather than a research protocol, the analytical framework for the enquiry was, in practice, a set of approaches for carrying out the EI exploration. The EI teams were not obliged to employ the framework.

Participation was intertwined inextricably within the concept of the EI from the very beginning. Thus, it was decided early on to apply a variety of qualitative methods among the programme stakeholders, including the children and the wider communities, so as to tap into the 'shared values' associated with the programmes. These shared values were conceived as the unspoken knowledge the various stakeholders possessed about the programmes, as well as the perceptions that, for instance, the stakeholders discussed together during routine contacts in the course of their involvement with the programmes. It was expected that the application of the qualitative methods would lead not only to pictures of the entire contexts of the programmes, but also to insights about the nature of the effectiveness of the programmes.

The original advisory committee met in late 1998 to develop first questions that might be posed to stakeholders about the programmes. During preliminary site visits, these questions were shared with programme personnel as examples of the sort of information the advisory committee was interested in gathering through the EI.

One particular set of questions that was recommended by the advisory committee – *the project timeline,* which revolved around the histories of the programmes – quickly took on a life of its own. The staff of the programmes embraced the notion of telling the 'story' of their programmes by answering the questions for themselves. In some instances, the personnel had already been asking themselves similar questions. In others, the programme personnel thought that, in answering the questions, they would learn more about how to carry out their work. In others still, the staff saw the opportunity to reflect on their programmes as a way of



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guiding their efforts in the future.

Thus, many programmes adopted the project timeline as a point of departure for the EI. The questions provided a means for the EI teams to examine how the programmes began, who was involved, what they had originally planned to accomplish, how they had anticipated reaching their goals and how philosophical underpinnings and methodologies had evolved, as well as significant events during the lives of the programmes.

The project timeline eventually became a vital part of the *analytical framework* upon which the opening stages of the exploration were anchored in many cases, though there was no obligation ever imposed on the teams to employ the framework, and some of them chose not to do so.

The analytical framework also encom-passed questions on the following pro-gramme elements.

- *Programme structure.* This subset of questions led to the creation of a diagram of the organisational structure of the programme and a description of how the leadership and management of the programme changed over time.
- *Institutional behaviour.* This subset sought to reveal the methods and processes used within the programme to recruit, hire and train staff, make decisions, address issues, overcome obstacles and so on. It also covered a description of the programme stakeholders.
- *Content.* This subset studied the nature and content of the programme interventions, especially those related to early childhood development.
- *Linkages.* This subset highlighted the linkages that had been formed between the programme and outside individuals, groups, organisations, donors and governments, as well as any networks in which the programme took part and the role of the programme within these networks.
- *Attitudes.* This subset explored the implicit and explicit assumptions of the stakeholders about the programme. For instance, to what extent had the values and beliefs of the stakeholders about the development and learning capacities of children and about the role of, say, education in the lives of individuals and in the well-being of the community determined the programme interventions in these areas?
- *Influences.* This subset was designed to produce a description of the influences on the programme over time. For example, an EI team might interview stakeholders about the economic, political and cultural context at the start of the programme, how this context had changed since then and how these changes had affected the programme. The team might also attempt to discover the effect on the programme of chance and of individual personal choices.
- *Resources.* This subset surveyed the effect of the lack or availability of financial resources and physical infrastructure on the programme.
- *Achievements and outcomes.* This subset drew attention to the influence or impact of the programme on others, including the children and families involved in the programme, the staff, the community and other organisations. It also covered effects in the broader context, such as on

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Exhibition on a programme during an EI conference

government policy.

- *Mapping the future.* This subset examined how the stakeholders envisaged the future of the programme with respect to the underlying philosophy, assumptions, goals and activities of the programme, the programme decision-making process, the linkages with organisations and the outcomes.

The EI Toolkit

The 'EI toolkit' was a set of enquiry tools that evolved as the EI progressed. The teams were free to use whichever tools they wished or none at all. They were encouraged to apply other tools if these were considered more appropriate.

Because the ten programmes were geographically and structurally different and targeted unique groups through a variety of approaches, each team was to design its own process of enquiry. With the option of using the analytical framework as a guideline, the team would, first of all, identify important local issues and define the core functions of the EI within the specific programme. It would then adopt or create additional sets of questions, participatory methods and survey mechanisms that would allow the team members to understand the complexity of the programme experiences more fully, coordinate the process of enquiry, explore the positive and negative impacts of the programme, describe the EI process and communicate findings to the coordination team, the Foundation and others.

It was considered essential that the teams would especially seek to engage all the programme stakeholders in the enquiry, including the people involved with the organisations that funded and managed the programmes. This would be part of the effort to collect information pertaining to the origins of the programmes, the influences on the programmes, changes in attitudes, beliefs and values over time, the characteristics of the target communities, and the management structure, organisational culture and outcomes and goals of the programmes.

Other, parallel open-ended investigations could easily be included in this information-gathering enterprise to allow the teams to advance their understanding of the perspectives and experiences of the stakeholders. For instance, reviews of the relationships among the various stakeholders and analyses by the stakeholders of their shared experiences might enhance the knowledge gained on effectiveness.

The process of enquiry could also serve as a capacity-building exercise in programme monitoring and evaluation. By employing the enquiry tools intensively and regularly, the EI teams would, in fact, be transferring them to the stakeholders.

Most significantly, through the establishment of spaces for reflection both literally, in terms of places where people could meet informally, and figuratively, in terms of time and funding, this enterprise could offer opportunities for the stakeholders to embark on self-evaluation and self-criticism and to take stock. The simple fact of having extra funds available that were earmarked for reflection and that were not tied to service delivery and

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Community members draw a river as an analogy

child or family outcomes would allow the programmes to deepen their understanding of what they were doing and determine how this might be made to relate more closely with the goals of the programmes and the needs of the diverse stakeholders. The EI might thereby be employed by a team primarily as a cooperative teaching-learning instrument, but it could also be used as a technique to allow programme beneficiaries, staff, other stakeholders and other community members to examine their experiences, become more aware of their needs and the benefits of the programmes and contribute more well informed action. In short, an important part of the process was to be the transfer of information back to those who had generated it in the first place.[4] If such a transfer could be built into a programme, it could become a major asset in the endeavour to secure an environment of learning for the programme.

A birthday card from the Chocó

Some of the enquiry tools were traditional, but some had to be innovative so that the teams could reach all the stakeholders, many of whom might be children, illiterate, or otherwise unable to express their thoughts in a manner that could be readily grasped. Selected tools were borrowed from the techniques of participatory learning and action.

The EI toolkit was proposed to the teams as aids in their enquiries, but the teams were free to use the tools or not, and the tools were not all used by all the teams. (Actually, many of the tools were singled out only as the EI progressed.) The teams were encouraged, in fact, to use whatever tools and methods they found most appropriate. The key was that the tools employed should facilitate participation and be relevant within the contexts of the programmes.

Besides the project timelines, several of the tools used by teams in their investigations and applied among the stakeholders are outlined below.

- *Interviews.* Interviews were carried out among many types of stakeholders depending on the needs of the particular enquiry. Typically, the interviews would be conducted at least among parents and programme staff. They might be structured, informal, or some mix of structured and informal.
- *Workshops.* Workshops were often conducted among parents, community members, or programme staff so as to spawn exchanges of opinion that might reveal significant effects and shortcomings in the programmes.
- *The analysis of photos.* Parents or other stakeholders were shown photographs or slides featuring children or adults involved in routine situations linked to a programme. They

4 The considerable value of this 'space for reflection' to the understanding of the stakeholders was not fully appreciated at the outset of the EI.

were then asked to comment on the situations. They might also be questioned further so that they would provide more detail.

- *Anecdotes and stories.* Stakeholders would be asked to use anecdotes to relate experiences or recall situations, or they would be given a topic, such as a routine day of activity within a programme, and be asked to tell a story on this topic. The idea was to promote dialogue.
- *Analogies and pictures.* Stakeholders, usually programme personnel and adult members of the families that composed the programme target groups, but sometimes children as well, would be asked to draw pictures showing the programme as an object or a natural phenomenon, such as the flow of a river or a rose. They were to provide details about the problems and benefits of the programme as though they were obstacles or peaceful harbours along the course of the river or the pleasant odours or the thorns of the rose. Often, people who had difficulty articulating their thoughts welcomed this more roundabout means to discuss their impressions, whether positive or negative.
- *Calendars.* Stakeholders would be asked to organise their views of a programme or their lives within a programme into a calendar. They were to show their experiences with the programme from the beginning until the present as though they were events on the calendar.
- *Family albums.* Stakeholders, usually family members, were asked to maintain photo albums with notes to document the impact of the programme on the family. This tool tended to encourage more self-awareness among stakeholders, while providing clues to the context and the evolution of a programme.
- *Diaries and detailed notes.* Stakeholders would be asked to take careful, systematic notes on meetings and their daily programme activities so as to help build up an historical record of a programme.
- *Spider webs.* A concept or term would be discussed and notes would be kept in a 'spider web' of associations. Additional spider webs of related questions, comments and observations and other relevant data would also be kept so that the participants could sort out, categorise and link their thoughts to the statements of others and so that the discussions could be reconstituted later in narrative form.
- *Drama and songs.* Stakeholders would be asked to employ traditional and improvised drama and songs to express their feelings about a programme.
- *Games and toys.* The construction and use of games and toys could help encourage the closer participation of parents and children in a programme.
- *Observation.* An on-going activity of most of the EI teams was day-to-day observation of programme activities. Team members would discuss their impressions with the stakeholders at appropriate moments. These discussions often either showed that the impressions were mistaken, or confirmed them. The observation and discussions allowed the team members to gain additional insights.

Variations on some or all of these tools were used by many of the EI teams. (Details are provided in the programme summaries that follow in the main text of this report.) Much of the information collection undertaken within the EI through the application of these tools was aimed at putting together portraits of the programmes. This was a difficult process, since the perceptions and experiences of the stakeholders were as varied as the words the stakeholders employed to describe them. The task was rendered a little easier if the teams relied on discussions with the stakeholders themselves to analyse and organise the content of the information. By thus taking what had been discovered back to the people who had

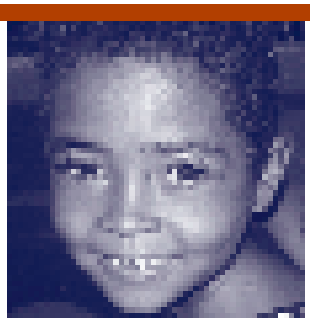
generated the information, it became possible both to make sure the stakeholders had been understood correctly and to deepen the understanding of the stakeholders and the team members through the stimulation of further dialogue. Tracer studies on children who had been involved in the programmes were occasionally employed as a mirror to allow stakeholders to draw additional conclusions and add other perspectives.[5] The tracer studies also relied on the application of some of the qualitative tools.

Thus, the EI enquiry usually included the design of a plan, the creation or selection of participatory methods and tools, the gathering of information through the application of these methods and tools, the analysis of the information with the help of the stakeholders from whom the information had been gathered, tracer studies and, finally, the drafting of a descriptive and analytical narrative on the entire process.

Summaries based on eight of the reports so drafted are included hereafter.[6]

5 Ad hoc tracer studies were occasionally conducted by the programmes for limited purposes within their own target communities. These 'impromptu studies' are so identified within the text whenever they are mentioned. The Foundation also performed tracer studies among programmes in several countries, including some of the countries or programmes involved in the EI. A list of these studies can be found in the bibliography.

6 For reasons unrelated to the Foundation or the EI, two of the ten programmes did not produce EI reports and are therefore not represented in this publication. Mozambique chose not to participate in the reporting process, while the Netherlands participated in the EI for one year and decided to limit their EI activity to an exercise that resulted in the drafting of an evaluation paper.



1. Why the Story of Promesa is Worth Telling

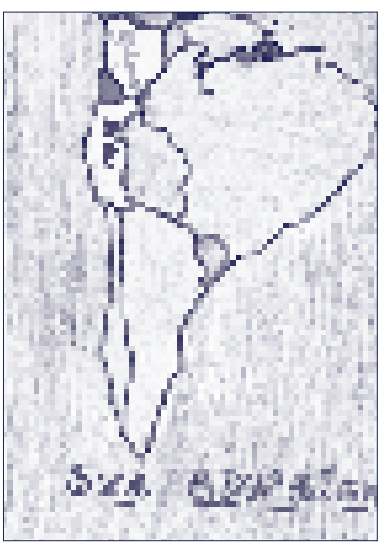
The programme described here was implemented among poor communities in an isolated area on the Pacific coast of Colombia. The text offers evidence on the difficulties in undertaking the transition from an organised regional programme run by experienced professional practitioners to individual local programmes run by community members. The Effectiveness Initiative played an important role in helping some of the practitioners understand the value of their contributions to the communities over the years.[1]

The Chocó

> *'The nuns were. . . teaching us to sew and embroider and weave, and those of us who were taking part had to bring our little children along with us,. . . and this was a problem because the nuns had their own things to do. We were in the workshop one day when a nun. . . arrived with a couple, and she introduced us. . . . They [the couple] saw the children, and they asked me... why I brought my children with me,. . . and I said I did not have anywhere to leave [the children]. . .'*
>
> – A Promesa participant

The story as we tell it begins in the mid-1970s when Marta Arango and Glendon P. Nimnicht made the decision to organise a research and development centre in Colombia. Arango wanted to return to her native country to work among her people and apply what she had learned during a decade of study and professional activity abroad.

During one trip, the couple travelled with their children from Ciudad Bolivar, Venezuela, where they had been working on a community-based early childhood development programme, to Antioquia, Colombia, where Arango's family lived. One of the stops the couple made in Colombia at this time was in the Chocó, a Pacific coastal region, to see Sofia Arango, Marta Arango's sister, a Teresita nun.



Travelling to Bahía Solano, Nuquí, Panguí and Valle, the four small coastal communities in which the Teresita nuns were working in the Chocó, was not very easy. The Chocó is the most remote administrative department of Colombia.[2] Because of the forests, there was no road communication between the interior and the municipalities of the Chocoana coast. In theory, small planes came into Bahía Solano three times a week, but that was only when the difficult weather

1 The core of this summary is based on Myers et al. (2004).

2 Colombia is the fourth largest country in South America. It occupies an area roughly equivalent to France, Portugal and Spain combined. It is the only country in South America with access to both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean.

conditions permitted. An unpaved road connected the airport to Valle. Only two picturesque jalopies, not always in service, plied that road, and the 18-kilometre trip took more than an hour. To move on from Valle to the even more isolated communities of Nuquí and Panguí required a motorboat. To go to the Indian communities located upstream from the coast, one walked or travelled by canoe. Beasts of burden could not be used.

Nonetheless, many tourists found the trip to the Chocoana coast worth the trouble. There is a beautiful black sand beach near Valle. Fresh fruits abound and are always at hand. The lush green landscape, with its many and varied flowers, has meant that the Chocó is considered by some the best example of a tropical rain forest anywhere in the world. The Chocó can capture the soul.

Any travel posters would have to conceal much, however. The region was extremely poor. The principal economic centres of the country were readily accessible only by way of plane or boat from Buenaventura, to the south. The cost of the extraction and exploitation of the local mineral resources, mainly gold and silver, was high for this reason. In any case, there was no financial sector able to hold or invest earnings, which were transferred out of the region. Most trade was in the hands of people from elsewhere. By the same token, most consumption goods and the principal subsistence goods were brought in from other regions at relatively greater cost. The residents generally made their living by fishing, growing rice, or cultivating bananas or other tropical fruits.[3] The constant rains, the nutrient-poor, leached soil, the crowds of insects and the difficulty of using traction animals rendered other farming impractical. The basic needs of more than 60% of the population were not being met. Less than 50% of households had running water, and about a quarter had no electricity. Because of the high incidence of poverty, the insufficient diets and the poor sanitary conditions, the prevalence of malnutrition and disease was high.

When Arango and Nimnicht landed to begin their visit, they exchanged the eternal spring of Medellín for hot, humid Chocó, where the annual rainfall is one of the most substantial in the world and where malaria was rampant. They found that only Bahía Solano had a reasonably good supply of running water, but, even in that fishing and farming community of 5,000 people, a sanitation system was lacking, and there were not more than 30 latrines. In Panguí, except for the facilities in the mission house of the Teresitas, there were no bathrooms or latrines; in Nuquí and Valle, there were one or two. The couple saw streets and beaches littered with garbage. Pigs, chickens and dogs wandered about freely. It seemed no effort had ever been made to control the rats; they were part of daily life.

Their conversations with the nuns and the community members sparked Arango and Nimnicht to believe the poor people of the four communities in the Chocó represented what they had been looking for. The setting provided an extraordinary challenge for them to make a real contribution. Furthermore, an established organisation with close ties to the community – the Teresitas – was in place and interested in assisting in the realisation of an idea they had.

The Idea

In 1968, Nimnicht had started a project at the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, in San Francisco. The project revolved around the design and testing of

3 The Chocó has a relatively important indigenous population (6% of the approximately 350,000 inhabitants at the end of the 1990s), and it is the only department in Colombia in which Afro-Colombians represent the majority (80%). The rest of the population is mixed (10%) or of European descent (4%).

instructional games and toys in the Ravenwood school district. A group of mothers attended a two-hour session one day per week to learn how to use the games and toys with their children. Each week, they took home a different game or toy. The results were promising. The mothers were able to use the games and toys with their children, and the children learned the concepts that the games and toys were designed to teach them.

A second field trial was conducted in two school districts in the state of Utah. There, the laboratory supplied the games and toys, as well as relevant manuals, to another institution. In this case, the aim was to discover if outcomes similar to those achieved in Ravenwood could be reached by someone with no previous experience of the instructional materials and relying only on the manuals. This trial was successful.

The project had been effective among mothers who had formal education, but would it work among mothers who had only limited education or who could not read or write at all?

To find out, Arango and Nimnicht accepted an invitation to run an experimental project in Ciudad Guyana, Venezuela. The results were the same. Illiterate and semi-literate women could also easily use the games and toys, and their children learned what they were meant to learn. Indeed, the children learned more than did a group of children from the same *barrio* (district) who had attended a year of pre-school, but had not participated in the project.

Arango and Nimnicht acquired several other bits of information in Venezuela. First, children 10 to 14 years of age were also adept at applying the instructional materials among their younger siblings. Second, it was important to add other group activities to the project, such as art and music, in order to enhance the quality of the learning and expand the educational content. However, it would be difficult to accomplish the latter outside a classroom environment. Moreover, regardless of the achievements, the project would always lack credibility among some people if professional teachers were not involved.

In the Chocó, Arango and Nimnicht saw a good environment in which to try out their new approach to early childhood development. In the four coastal communities visited by the couple, about 70% of the population did not know how to read or write. The primary schools functioned irregularly. Children often entered primary school at age 7 or 8 and as often left before graduation. There were also four junior high schools in the area. For more advanced education, the only option was to attend a normal school elsewhere. The more well educated in the communities consisted of a few teachers and law enforcement officials, several government employees and some small traders and shopkeepers. Except for the schools, almost no government programmes reached the communities.

The risk of failure associated with trying to develop a project was significant not only because of the extreme conditions, but also because of the complications that might result from attempting to operate a project from distant Medellín, where Arango and Nimnicht were located. The risk notwithstanding, the situation in the Chocó seemed to the positive-minded couple to represent a promising opportunity, and they decided to take on the challenge.

Preliminary Steps

> *'A proposal was sent with a big budget. I thought it was a good proposal for several reasons. . . . The project did not involve heavy infrastructure in the Chocó . . . because [it] would work with the Teresitas . . . [and] through mothers groups. . . . It was an integrated project, with malaria brought in. Evaluation was built in from the start, and a proposal was included to carry out a cohort study.'*
>
> – A former staff member, Bernard van Leer Foundation

In 1976, in Sabaneta, a municipality close to Medellín, Arango and Nimnicht set up the International Centre for Education and Human Development (CINDE) and drew up plans to carry out a pilot project.[4] They established more formal contacts with the four coastal communities, Bahía Solano, Nuquí, Panguí and Valle. Given that people from the communities expressed a desire to implement such a project and to improve their capacities to perform the work with the communities, Arango and Nimnicht needed to offer them the means to undergo training. A plan therefore also had to be drafted for a training component. Trainers of trainers would have to come to Sabaneta to take part.

Communication among the four communities in the Chocó and with the outside world was insecure. Mail and telegraph services were available in Bahía Solano, Nuquí and Valle. The only short wave radios were in the police station in Bahía Solano and in the Teresita mission houses. More radios were thus procured for Bahía Solano and Nuquí.

It was necessary to undertake a preliminary diagnosis so as to obtain a clearer picture of the needs and problems of the communities. This diagnosis would also serve as a baseline for a research and development programme component.

A place for meetings and other programme activities had to be obtained; transportation had to be arranged, and teaching materials and other supplies had to be purchased. Perhaps most urgently, additional financial resources were required.

Following a decision by the Government in early 1977 to institute a 2% payroll tax for the improvement of family welfare, the Bernard van Leer Foundation was invited to visit Colombia to discuss possible alternatives to the formal and expensive *centros de atención preescolar* ('pre-school care centres'), the main type of pre-school then available.

Alerted by a friend, Arango called for an appointment with the Foundation representative. A meeting was fixed. At the meeting, Arango and Nimnicht described their idea. The Foundation officer was intrigued and told the couple they should submit a proposal. At a minimum, the representative promised to see if other donors might be interested.

Drawing on their experience, the couple sent a proposal to Foundation headquarters in The Hague. The proposal was centred on children, but reflected a broad vision of human and social development. The methodology involved reliance on local human, institutional and material resources and the identification of and response to local needs. Considerable attention was to be given to the enhancement of self-awareness and self-esteem among the population. A basic strategy of the proposed programme was the training of the parents of young children to furnish better home environments for cognitive development and education, as well as the main delivery system for sound hygiene and good health practices.

CINDE would not be involved directly on site within the communities. Nonetheless, it would assume responsibility for the support and supervision of the entire programme and for human resource development, curriculum design, evaluation, relations with national and international organisations and the production of instructional materials and documentation, including printed and audiovisual materials aimed at reinforcing local culture. The proposal did not mention community organisation, nor did it grapple with whether the work might be sustained beyond the first three years.

The Foundation liked the proposal. Indeed, it decided that the proposal was insufficiently budgeted and agreed to supply funding over the three-year period. At the end of this period, the funding was renewed for another three years.

4 The organisation was originally called the International Laboratory for Educational Development.

The First Years

> *'. . . I was doing laundry in the stream (at the time, I maintained myself by taking in washing. . .), when Sister Lucia arrived and said, ". . . you remember the couple that visited on such and such a date? They. . . are going to organise a programme here. . . . In a while, two of us from Bahía [Bahía Solano], two more from Valle, two from Nuquí and two from Panguí are going to go to Medellín for training".'*
>
> – A Promesa participant

The programme that eventually became known as the *Programa para el Mejoramiento de la Educación, la Salud y el Ambiente* ('Programme for the Improvement of Education, Health and the Environment') or, in the acronym, 'Promesa', which, in Spanish, also means 'promise', started in four coastal communities in the Chocó in 1978. The first activity revolved around toy libraries in the communities. The libraries each provided 25 educational toys, 25 pyramids with squares, another 25 with triangles, 25 with circles and so on. From each community, 25 mothers were initially chosen to participate, for a total of 100 Promesa families. The mothers used the toys in their homes to stimulate the physical and intellectual development of their 3-to-7-year-olds by playing games and interacting with the children in other ways. They met together once a week to learn how to employ the toys to best advantage in their 'pre-schools in the home'. A new group of mothers was added every six months for the first two years.

The weekly meetings were conducted by *promotores* ('programme agents'), who were usually women (*promotoras*). The original promotores were Teresitas who had been trained by CINDE staff in Sabaneta. The promotores received instruction in basic health care, nutrition, hygiene and other relevant areas. They were to provide the parents in the communities with an integrated education that would enable them to foster the well-rounded development of their children, but also with the knowledge, skills and motivation necessary to transform the environment within which the children were growing up. Upon their return to the coast, the newly trained Teresitas immediately began working with the groups of mothers. Veteran promotores were to serve as community problem-solvers and leaders.

The plan had been for each group to meet once a week for six months and thereafter only occasionally as required. The initial programme activities would focus on building the capacity of families to provide children with the care, education and development advantages that were not being offered through local public or private institutions. Progressively, as the self-confidence and other abilities of families became stronger, broader programme initiatives were to be added, and, as time and opportunity permitted, families were to be encouraged to network in order to solve other problems that affected children and the community in general.

The programme did not evolve quite so gradually, however. The interests of the mothers very quickly reached beyond the intellectual development of their children to embrace non-educational programme topics such as health, nutrition, hygiene and the environment. More rapidly than expected, the groups became sites for the discussion of the problems of the community. In a sense, given the lack of local institutions, the groups became key community organisations. At the end of the six months, they invariably wished to continue meeting regularly, and some mothers attended all the meetings they could, including those for other groups.

This tendency to accelerate was encouraged by CINDE. It was in line with the announced plan for the growth of the programme. Indeed, it suited the organisation's overall goal of fostering good health care, a positive self-image among community members and improved

general living conditions among the children.

Thus, during the first two years, the educational initiative was expanded through the addition of an early stimulation component for 0-to-3-year-olds. The mothers learned new ways to observe the needs of these young children and respond accordingly. They also learned methods for providing their children with a better physical environment.

The schedule of the meetings became more flexible. The discussions led to other, more general community undertakings such as projects to dispose of waste, clean up streets and beaches, drain stagnate pools, build adequate latrines and obtain safe drinking water. Among the most important of these initiatives was the creation of a health care component, including an effort to control malaria.

COURTESY OF CINDE

A meeting with community leaders

Health care

At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, the Chocó showed the worst socio-economic indicators of any department in the country. It was therefore targeted by an emergency recovery plan for the Pacific coast of Colombia. For this reason, the two municipalities containing the four communities in which Promesa had been initiated received special assistance from public social service institutions. This assistance was quite limited, however, and hardly designed to promote a 'participative' transformation of the living conditions among the inhabitants, who, moreover, lacked confidence in the institutions because of the reputed corruption and inefficiency. Meanwhile, grass-roots organisations were few and tended to be exclusive. One might thus say that the department had poor 'social capital', though family ties tended to be strong in these small communities.

Promesa aspired to achieve significant progress precisely in these two areas: participation and the creation of social capital. Also, because of the programme goal of the establishment of an integrated approach responsive to needs, it seemed natural that Promesa should seek to take up some of the slack of public institutions by engaging with the problems of health care, for example, so as to enhance the lives of the people in the communities.

The programme therefore sought sources of funding for a health component. One of the potential donors it contacted was a non-governmental organisation now known as Cordaid.[5] Cordaid agreed to supply the necessary financing, and, in 1980, the primary health care component was added to the programme.

There was substantial community participation. The promotores were selected by community members (through secret ballot), and this tended to confer on them greater

5 Like the Bernard van Leer Foundation, Cordaid is based in The Hague. See <*www.cordaid.nl*>.

authority. They were specially trained to carry out duties as primary health care aides in the promotion of proper preventive health care, particularly among families. The focus was on diseases responsible for the high infant mortality rate in the Chocó, such as acute respiratory infections and diarrhoeal diseases. The promotores also ran health care stations for the distribution of basic remedies and the supply of other essential health services. Gradually, steps were taken to develop appropriate technologies for the treatment and supply of water and to find alternatives to salting or smoking for the conservation of meat and fish.

Because of the incidence of malaria in the Chocó, the fight against the disease was one of the most important contributions of the health care component. The efforts relied very much on community awareness campaigns carried out with the help of children, teachers and community leaders. People in two of the communities were trained to take blood samples and examine them under microscopes to make diagnoses. The campaign led to a significant and fruitful research project starting in 1989. The anti-malaria unit of the health care component began circulating a printed guide for group leaders, 25 publications on various aspects of the struggle against malaria, audio tapes for people who could not read or wished to use the publications to learn to read better and an instruction booklet on the production of mosquito nets.

In part through the endeavours of CINDE and Promesa and with the support of the Ministry of Health and other national and international institutions, the infant mortality rate in the Chocó fell by a factor of two in only nine years (1988-1997), and the incidence of malaria dropped by more than half.

Chocó community centres

Meanwhile, in Sabaneta, besides the training component for promotores from the Chocó, CINDE had opened an integrated childhood development programme that included the active participation of parents. The children attended a school two half-days per week for art and music instruction. At the same time, as in the Chocó, the mothers met once a week to learn how to become 'teachers' at home.

This was the realisation of Arango's and Nimnicht's idea upon their departure from Venezuela. The results among the mothers and children in learning the basics through the educational games and toys were about the same as they had been in the earlier experiments. Now, however, there was the addition of the group art and music activities. The cost was much less than that of a regular pre-school programme, so CINDE considered the approach a viable alternative to formal pre-schools.

The experience in Venezuela provided the basis for a CINDE child-to-child programme in Sabaneta. Through this programme, 10-to-14-year-olds learned how to look after their younger siblings and play educational games with them. They also played educational games together that had been designed for their own age group, and they took part in other activities such as drama clubs.

CINDE experimented with a version of the educational toys library programme that had been expanded for primary-school-aged children. The programme was called 'play and learn how to think'. The focus was on helping the children learn critical thinking skills that are not taught in school, but can enhance school achievement. The children learned to look for order in the world around them, discover patterns, reason inductively and deductively and examine alternatives and probabilities. An evaluation of the approach demonstrated that the children could play the games that are part of the programme and learn the concepts that are the objectives of the games, thereby improving their performance in mathematics and enhancing

their language skills.

In general, the approach to education was based on a vision of teaching not as an instrument to transmit information, but as an active environment in which to 'construct' knowledge and socialisation and in which traditional wisdom and advances in knowledge could 'dialogue'.

COURTESY OF CINDE

Planning Promesa activities

Parent-child centres were built by community members in Valle in 1981 and in Bahía Solano and Panguí in 1982, and, as CINDE became satisfied that the Sabaneta programmes had been sufficiently tested, they were launched at the centres. Eventually, pre-schools were also opened in the centres (in Panguí, for instance), and, starting in 1984, the regular provision of food to pre-schoolers and nutrition education to mothers was initiated. The centres likewise hosted malaria diagnosis and treatment stations. The existence of such centres offered to the communities a tangible motive to feel that Promesa was theirs and helped the communities acquire a sense of independence and identity.

Income-generating activities

The Promesa production component organised local projects to bring people together to augment their skills and improve their incomes. It included a microcredit facility for individuals wishing to undertake an income-generating activity, such as a bakery, a carpentry shop, a community pharmacy, or a community store. Arts and crafts clubs were formed; women were trained as seamstresses, and people were assisted in the creation of enterprises to manufacture goods, such as mattresses, mosquito nets and clothing, that could be sold in the community. The component was less successful in helping people establish capacities in marketing and business management. It was discovered that small, tightly knit groups and small producer groups seemed to work better than larger groups. It was also realised that it was better to proceed slowly and not attempt to organise larger projects too soon. Though it did not achieve great financial success for the participants, the component survived and attained modest goals.

Research and evaluation

CINDE had also been envisaged as a research and development centre for early childhood development initiatives, and a process of planning, evaluation and research was implemented from the initial stages to accompany Promesa in the Chocó. The communities, especially the mothers, gradually became more and more involved in the process. This feature went some way in establishing the credibility of the programme.

At the outset, information was gathered on the communities and among the inhabitants as a baseline so as to be able to gauge changes during the evolution of Promesa. One of the most important tools in this effort was the interviews conducted among parents. The interviews included questions about the education, occupations and incomes of family members and questions about the home, such as the condition of the sanitation and water facilities, the floors, the walls and the roof. Parents were asked about their self-image, their aspirations for

their children, their ability to care for the physical and emotional well-being of their children, and family activities involving the children. Information was also collected on under-5 mortality and on live births among the families.

Another important information-gathering tool was the studies among the children. Examinations among children who had participated in Promesa were developed to evaluate their academic achievement in mathematics, language and logical thinking through five years of elementary schooling. After the start of the nutritional programme in 1984, the change in nutritional status among 3-to-6-year-olds was evaluated through growth monitoring.

Accomplishments and lessons learned during the first years

The original proposal to the Bernard van Leer Foundation had laid out ambitious goals and outcomes in the four communities of the Chocó, and the results after the first five years did not disappoint. The planned initial approach of advancing gradually from one simple programme component – the stimulation of intellectual development among 3-to-7-year-olds by their parents – and adding new components one by one did not work, but in the positive sense that the groups of mothers, as well as the nuns, quickly became too enthusiastic to be satisfied with progressing only one step at a time. They wished to implement the many components of the programme more rapidly.

The learning experience in the Chocó thus highlighted the advantages of a flexible approach able to encompass responses to several community priorities at once. Because of the flexible methodology originally adopted among the groups of mothers, stakeholders gained confidence and developed a greater understanding of their needs, and Promesa matured relatively rapidly into an integrated community development programme involving childhood development, sanitation, malaria control and income-generating activities.

Moreover, Promesa engaged the contributions of many community members, not all of whom had children or were participating because of children. People were also working at solving local community economic problems through, for example, the production, sale and distribution of rice or wood and at confronting community infrastructure problems through, for instance, the construction of a small hydroelectric power plant in Valle.

COURTESY OF CINDE

Children learned to care for siblings

Crises in an Environment of Expansion

In the mid-1980s, three events affected the evolution of the programme significantly:

the withdrawal of the Teresitas as promotoras, the end of the funding by the Bernard van Leer Foundation and the emergence of community organisations to manage Promesa.

The nuns leave

It became evident that the expectation implicit in the original proposal that the Teresitas should become the locally based organisation providing regular support to the programme and carrying forward the programme was not realistic despite the family ties and the other links the nuns possessed in the communities. First, differences surfaced between CINDE and the Teresitas about how development projects should be conceived and run. The evangelical, charitable, giving approach of the Teresitas was in some ways opposed to the Promesa methodology. While Promesa hoped to involve the people in the solution of their own problems, many of the nuns seemed often to prefer to explain to people what they were going to discover rather than guiding them to discover it themselves. It is easy to see why the nuns did this. In a teaching-learning situation, a teacher may find it more effortless to instruct rather than search together with the student. When they used the educational toys and games, the mothers, too, quite often drilled rather than stimulated and coaxed.

Second, the turnover among the Teresitas serving as trainers or trainees for Promesa was substantial. The order realised these nuns could use their Promesa experience in other settings and reassigned them accordingly. The Promesa philosophy and approach were thereby diffused to other sites, but this also meant that new Teresita trainers and trainees were constantly needed in core programme areas.

There was a positive side to this separation, which occurred starting in 1983. Though Promesa was forced to seek alternative trainers quickly rather than gradually, the solution it found was more consistent with the participatory philosophy than had been the path leading through the nuns to the community. To replace the nuns, Promesa selected mothers who had assisted the nuns in their work with Promesa. These *madres asistentes* ('mother assistants') from the communities were to undergo training to perform the same duties as the nuns. A problem arose because these people – mothers and housewives without much education or experience as independent social workers, though many of them had been serving side by side with the Teresitas for several years already – did not possess the recognition or prestige that the nuns had held among the communities and within community institutions. It took time for these women to establish themselves successfully as competent and productive agents of the programme.

Funding crisis

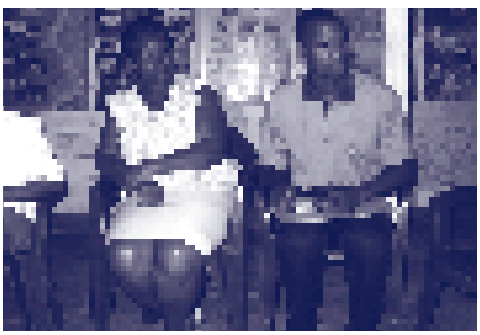
The Bernard van Leer Foundation had approved funding for the early childhood development component for three years and then extended the support for another three years. During this time, CINDE believed it had made significant progress in the creation of an appropriate framework to foster the healthy development of the children in the four programme communities, but it was also conscious of the need to consolidate these advances. Moreover, other communities in the Chocó were requesting similar initiatives, and this would require expansion. However, the Foundation felt it had achieved its more limited, though no less useful goal of assisting Promesa to take hold in the four communities, so, after six years, it decided not to renew its financial involvement.

The institutional ties that CINDE had established, partly with the help of the Foundation,

proved valuable in this situation. Cordaid, for example, continued funding the health care component. In cooperation with the communities and in response to identified needs, other organisations, including government entities, likewise supplied financing or assistance for specific actions.

Still, because there was no overall source of funding, it was necessary to reorganise the programme. The situation was discussed in the communities, and the promotores offered to find other ways to cover their compensation, including through contributions from the communities themselves. By way of this and other steps, the financial crisis was overcome, and CINDE was able to consolidate the programme in Bahía Solano, Nuquí, Panguí and Valle and expand it into nine other coastal communities in 1985 and another dozen communities in 1988, though CINDE no longer financed some components.

Promesa as a community organisation



COURTESY OF CINDE

Community participation was boosted

Thus, instead of representing an obstacle, the financial crisis had led to a reorganisation that tended to boost community participation in the programme. Other steps taken to overcome obstacles and consolidate successes during these years tended similarly to increase the involvement of the communities. One of the most important of these in terms of the subsequent story of the programme was the legal establishment of an organisation called Promesa in each of the communities. The staff of these 'micro-Promesa' organisations included the promotores and other programme participants and stakeholders.

CINDE and Plan International

The next major phase in the story of Promesa began in 1988 with a decision to accept important funding from Plan International to spread the programme to several inland sites in the Chocó, including Quibdó, the capital.[6] The considerable expansion achieved through this partnership meant the programme now reached 11,500 families in 38 communities in seven municipalities in the Chocó. Of these families, 7,000 participated in integrated development initiatives, and 4,500 benefited from the anti-malaria component.

The new chapter inland evolved differently. Rather than promotores, the inland initiative depended on 'community leaders' who worked for the CINDE-Plan partnership. Because Plan International focuses on the sponsorship of children at a distance by individual donors, the leaders had to maintain communications between the sponsored families and the sponsors, and, because each of the leaders was responsible for 80 to 100 families, this took up a large portion of their time.

Meanwhile, Promesa continued more or less unchanged among the coastal communities. The promotores on the coast thus worked directly for the communities, and they each remained responsible only for the 25 families in their group. They therefore had more time

6 For more information about Plan International, see <*www.plan-international.org*>.

to dedicate to each family.

These and other differences in the approaches of CINDE and Plan International led to a critical moment in the life of the programme. Some of the participants thought they could accomplish more by working like the promotores, that is, directly with and for the communities. Others believed that, by working for Plan International, which is a very large organisation with many resources, they could generate more advantages for the communities.

There was another consideration as well. When the programme began, public social services were very limited in the Chocó. For this reason, the promotores were trained to impart to the parents and to community institutions skills in several areas, for example, education, health, the provision of basic needs and so on. The promotores therefore had a substantial role as community educators and development agents. However, as the coverage and distribution of public social services improved in the Chocó, there emerged some duplication. The debate over 'promotores' and 'community leaders' thus also came to involve a discussion over the breadth of functions to be carried out by programme agents.

A series of adjustments was therefore engineered in the programme content and methods at the beginning of the 1990s, as follows:

- A committee composed of representatives of CINDE and Plan International was established to monitor the entire programme.
- The communities themselves selected the 'community leaders', just as the promotores had been selected in the CINDE approach.
- The promotores were responsible for coordinating actions in specific areas. They were appointed by the community leaders and received payment for their work.
- Some of the leaders specialised in one component.
- Training schemes were altered slightly so as to take into account the new functions and roles, though the basic principles and purposes of training were the same. An effort was made to communicate to trainees the importance of working with the communities, as had been the case in the CINDE training process. They were also taught the basics in planning and administration.

The CINDE-Plan partnership spawned cross-institutional learning. While CINDE and the Promesa programme benefited from the expertise of Plan International in planning and management, Plan gained appreciably from the expertise of CINDE in pre-school and primary school initiatives. CINDE staff presented Promesa in detail to Plan staff in Colombia and elsewhere in the region on several occasions. Beginning in 1996, CINDE also participated actively in the development of Plan's education strategy for the South America region. The strategy profited especially from the Promesa experience in pre-school and primary school education. Indeed, as a result of the collaboration, Plan shifted the focus of its regional education strategy from infrastructure development towards a balanced approach involving teacher training, active learning methodologies and the vigorous participation of parents.

Ever since the creation of the partnership between CINDE and Plan International, CINDE had been seeking ways to transfer the management and control of the programme to the local stakeholders. Because of the recent major shifts in the programme and as the partnership between CINDE and Plan International evolved, the idea gained ground of establishing local non-governmental organisations based on the Promesa participants. Steps were taken to build the capacity of the members of the communities in management, evaluation and other relevant areas accordingly.

Thus, in 1997, the Centro de Investigación para el Desarrollo Local Auto Sostenible ('Centre for Research and Local Sustainable Development', or CIDEAL) was formed in Quibdó to supply funding and technical support for the Promesa programme. Local Promesa organisations were established. CINDE withdrew from Promesa and the partnership with Plan International, which had agreed to guarantee financing for five years so as to allow the new organisations to mature and find other sources of funding.

As the CINDE connection wound down, it was difficult for some of the Promesa programmes in individual communities to transition to local management, the creation of their own agenda and independent operation despite the fact that they had learned to plan and evaluate with respect to the programme. Nonetheless, Promesa has survived. It may not be precisely the same Promesa of two decades ago, but an integrated community-based approach to early childhood development continues to be pursued. Community members can point to local Promesa committees and councils that meet regularly, well-established planning and evaluation procedures, on-going programme initiatives, and the improved health and educational status of children.

Effectiveness in the Promesa Programme

By 1999, CINDE was no longer directly involved with the coastal communities of the Chocó or with Promesa. Plan International, meanwhile, had moved on, attempting to implement its methods and realise its goals within Promesa schemes and structures.

The reaction among CINDE staff because of this course of events was to experience a sensation of loss. They believed they had no influence over projects they had started and nurtured. They felt protective towards the communities and individuals they had assisted and with whom they had been so closely linked for so many years; yet they no longer found any outlet for this feeling. Their ties with the communities seemed broken. They often disagreed fundamentally with the approach adopted by Plan International, but, even when this was not the case, they suffered from frustration and self-recrimination. Somehow, they blamed themselves.

This was the mood at CINDE when the possibility arose for participation in the Effectiveness Initiative (EI). At first, there was hesitation. As the EI exploration evolved, however, the sentiment among the CINDE staff changed. Through the EI, they were able to re-establish contacts with the coastal communities, Promesa and various other stakeholders. During the application of the EI tools, they heard the comments, frequently enthusiastic, of the people who had been involved in Promesa. They began to see the benefits Promesa had brought to the coastal people and to discover how well rooted the programme had become among the communities. They began to understand what they had done. They regained a sense of pride and accomplishment. They recovered the value of Promesa.

> *'Indigenous groups are transmitting using radio-telephones. . . . Community members have created projects. . . . People from the coast have gone to other regions to work as teachers. . . . When a natural disaster occurs, such as a flood, people get together to look for solutions. . . . The new ways – proper housing construction, good health care and nutrition habits, schooling – are now taken for granted . Local day-care centres are being managed by Promesa mothers.'*
>
> – Patricia Botero, CINDE-Bogotá, referring to the coastal communities in 2000

COURTESY OF CINDE

A child of the Chocó

The EI helped CINDE staff come to terms with themselves and with their contributions to Promesa, but it also facilitated a fresh dialogue within CINDE and between CINDE and representatives of Plan International about the transition process within the programme. CINDE staff members began to look at this process in a slightly different light.

The collection of information, the identification of a conceptual scaffolding

The Colombia EI team examined Promesa for three years starting in 1999 in hopes of discovering what made the programme effective. The team soon determined that, in their enquiry, they would not limit themselves to the EI analytical framework.[7] They wished to explore other important dimensions and concepts as well. The following additional tools were therefore also used to assemble information.

- *A review of secondary sources.* From the beginning, Promesa has been documented in various ways. The records describe workshops and training sessions and embrace internal evaluations, donor reports and cost accounts. Manuals exist on the programme components. Videos have also been produced, including one showing Promesa in action, another detailing the anti-malaria strategy and two on the programme in Quibdó.
- *Longitudinal research study.* A longitudinal study was produced by CINDE on children and mothers in programme communities from the late 1970s to the late 1990s.
- *Open Interviews.* Interviews were conducted with the CINDE founders and members of the board of directors, current and former staff of Promesa and the CINDE-Plan International partnership, the director of CIDEAL, representatives of various collaborating institutions, donors, promotores and community leaders.
- *Questionnaires.* Selected staff were asked to respond to questionnaires.
- *Informal conversations.* Individuals discussed the programme with the EI team.
- *Focus groups.* Groups were formed among programme participants to discuss the programme and relate their experiences.
- *Anecdotes.* Programme participants were asked to speak about experiences that revealed ways in which the programme had been effective.
- *The river analogy.* Various groups were asked to imagine Promesa as a river with troubled, twisting stretches and places where the river was straight and the water flowed easily. They were then to draw a picture of this river and explain the significance of the drawing in terms of their views on the programme. The goal of the exercise was to help people locate key events and describe difficult moments in the story of the programme.
- *Throw-away objects.* Participants in groups were each asked to write about the moment in the life of the programme that was the most significant they had experienced. They were then to employ trash material and discarded objects to depict that moment. Others in the group would comment on these representations. Finally, the person who had created the display would explain the intended meaning.

The information generated during the course of the application of these tools was extraordinarily rich, and the EI team approached the organisation of this varied information by analysing it from numerous angles. The team eventually constructed five broad categories

7 The use of the EI analytical framework was not obligatory. See the general introduction.

for analysis: the conceptual scaffolding of Promesa, the institutional profile of CINDE, the characteristics of CINDE staff as programme actors, interinstitutional coordination between CINDE and Promesa, and the inner coherence of the programme.

During 2001, the team presented the preliminary outcomes for comment among groups in Bahía Solano, Cartagena, Quibdó and other communities. Naturally, the groups were not always in agreement either with the team's interpretations, or among themselves. In any case, the exercise certainly improved the team's understanding of Promesa and of the programme's impact and effectiveness. Below is a selection of insights achieved through this process.

Development among individuals and within families

The personal development of the participants was identified by the participants themselves as the most important achievement of Promesa. The involvement of community members in the programme led to positive changes in their lives. The knowledge and the skills they acquired helped them resolve problems. This increased their self-awareness and their self-confidence.

First and foremost, the substantial impact of the Promesa initiatives in training and education among mothers and children went very far in enhancing the credibility of Promesa within the communities of the Chocó. The children who passed through the Promesa pre-schools and who, today, are adolescents or young adults greatly appreciate their pre-school experience. The CINDE longitudinal study found that, in 1980, only 17% of 12-year-olds had reached fifth grade, while, in 1989, 51% of them did so. Elementary school children continued to stay longer in school, and they were performing relatively better in mathematics, languages and exercises in logical thinking than did their 1980 peers. Some of these children eventually reached university, which is not very typical in the Chocó.

There have also been many other positive effects on children. The infant mortality rate in the Promesa communities during the first five years of the programme dropped from 110 to 76 per 1,000 live births. There has been a sensible reduction in child morbidity over the life of the programme.

Children are making more productive use of their free time and are now taking part in a dynamic way in the development of their own communities in educational and cultural initiatives, mainly through the Promesa child-to-child and youth-to-child programmes.

Mothers also greatly benefited because of the knowledge and skills they acquired through Promesa. Many mothers commented to the EI team on the progress they had achieved especially in terms of childraising. They learned much about ways to communicate affection, as well as health care and hygiene messages, to their offspring. They helped improve formal and non-formal education. They were freed up from child-minding by the pre-schools, and this allowed some the extra time to continue their education. Their confidence in community activities such as discussions on education and community work was enhanced because of their participation in the mothers groups. The directors of Promesa community organisations have been women. The majority of the executive staff have been women. Most of the coordinators, promotores and programme community leaders have been women. In these positions and in their meetings with local government officials, public health care professionals and education authorities to solve community problems, these women enhanced their self-awareness and self-confidence and their standing before their husbands, families and communities.

Promesa is providing substantive support for more significant interaction between parents and children, particularly young children. There has been a great deal more involvement of parents in the stimulation of the intellectual development of their children, for instance, through games and toys. Because of the more important roles of mothers, but also through the income-generating activities, Promesa has also encouraged better relations between parents. By earning income, mothers and fathers have, in many instances, acquired more authority and more respect because of their steady contributions to the economic well-being of their families.

Creating a healthy environment for children

The central goal of Promesa has been the enhancement of early childhood development. To achieve this goal, Promesa first focused on building capacity among adults, mainly women, so as to foster a healthy environment for the upbringing of children. Promesa then opened up opportunities for individuals to apply their new knowledge and skills to actions that could transform their surroundings. The approach was integrated. It encompassed different dimensions of development not only among children, but also among families and communities. As a result, the impact of Promesa participants on their communities and the living conditions within their communities has been wide ranging.

Stagnant pools of water were eliminated, and improvements were engineered in the storage of food, in nutrition, in the treatment and supply of water and in community health care services. As these and other initiatives advanced, the programme gained credibility, the communities gained confidence and public service became a community effort.

The communities now play a much more important role in the improvement of the environment through reforestation. Thousands of latrines have been installed by the communities, and awareness campaigns have taught people how to use them appropriately. Homes are now being built with good drainage, water services and proper sanitary facilities. As part of the monitoring system of the anti-malaria programme component, a network of radio-telephones has been established to support communications, training and problem-solving. Malaria diagnosis stations furnished with microscopes and run by community health workers have been set up in isolated Promesa communities. There has not been a death due to malaria since 1992, and the number of cases of the disease has declined greatly. A cholera prevention programme is up and running. The incidence of intestinal infections and malnutrition has been substantially reduced.

COURTESY OF CINDE

Helping families transform their surroundings

Families value education more, and communities are more willing to mobilise resources for education. Some schools have organised parent-teacher committees to strengthen the quality of education and school-community relations. Teachers have created learning aids and course material for malaria and cholera prevention and have adopted child-to-child and learning-how-to-think programmes. The physical facilities of many schools have been renovated, and many community and school libraries have been organised.

Hundreds of professionals have graduated from CINDE training programmes on education, social development and social project planning and implementation and are now working in various social sector institutions in Promesa communities.

An accounting of some of the reasons for the effectiveness of Promesa

> *'The materials produced locally demonstrate the effectiveness [of the programme]. In the beginning, the toys were produced in a workshop.'*
>
> – A Promesa participant

Participants often mentioned that they were especially impressed by the coherence of the Promesa approach. The theoretical basis of the programme seemed sound and was easily understandable, and the method of implementation was straightforward. CINDE and Promesa institutions appeared to be very flexible and to reflect a clear vision of their purpose and their aims. These characteristics tended to make the value of the contribution of the programme participants more evident.

Some EI interviewees discussed the role of participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation in the effectiveness of the programme. They spoke of the need to be able to work through differences of opinion over policy. They also emphasised that this participative process gave people the opportunity to analyse their successes and failures, which helped correct mistakes and improve the programme. One fruitful hypothesis is that a programme is effective if it can make adjustments to take advantage of positive openings or to turn crisis to opportunity.

Another topic brought up frequently by interviewees is the sustainability of the programme. For some of the interviewees, particularly those who were involved in programme financing or in programme management, Promesa demonstrated sustainability to the extent that it has lasted for well over 20 years. For other interviewees, Promesa showed that it was sustainable because it survived despite the loss of the resources and technical support of CINDE, the founding institution. Some interviewees suggested, however, that Promesa had been endangered because more attention was not paid to the development of projects or other means to generate funds to cover the core costs of the local Promesa organisations that took the reins of the programme from CINDE.

> *'The people have [taken possession of] the programme. CINDE was able to withdraw from the programme, leaving human resources in place at all levels.'*
>
> – A Promesa participant

It may be necessary to attempt to understand sustainability less in terms of endurance over time and more in human and social terms. Sustainability may be located within people rather than within institutions or administrative structures.

The impact of Promesa has been evident in changes within individuals. When such

changes in people are significant and when they occur in many people and have a meaning for these people in their everyday surroundings and in their everyday lives, then one might speak of 'a transformation in culture'. This is also a kind of sustainability.

Some of the interviewees discussed Promesa as a model early childhood development programme. They outlined ways Promesa had affected policies at the national level.

> *'. . . jointly with other institutions, the programme encouraged the establishment of a non-formal approach to the care of children.'*
>
> – A Promesa participant

Stories We have Heard

There are many possible stories within this one story of Promesa. There are the stories of each of the individuals whose lives have been changed: the illiterate woman who became motivated to study reading and writing, the physician who became caught up in community development, the child from a poor family who is now attending medical school and the tribal leader who became a microscope technician. There is the story of changing times, of the effects of a flood and of the growth of narcotics cartels. There are the stories of the many poor communities that, in a matter of a few years, were able to achieve more than many of the community members had ever anticipated.

Why is the story told here, the story of Promesa, also worth telling? Perhaps the main reason lies in the many lessons to be learned from the telling.

2. Roses and Thorns in the Life of a Madre Guía

The report on the Effectiveness Initiative in Honduras that is summarised here presents two rather unique characteristics. First, the events recounted in the report are organised chronologically. The report thus offers a neat timeline of the EI in Honduras. Second, the report supplies a very clear, structured example of the application of the EI 'toolkit', including the analysis by the various stakeholders of the information gathered through the process. These features have been carried over into the text below.[1]

Christian Children's Fund

Christian Children's Fund supports early childhood development programmes in 27 countries. The purpose of the programmes is to promote the development of children within the family and community so that the children are given hope, gain respect and become more able to achieve positive changes and improve their prospects later in life.

The programme in Honduras is the most advanced. In a country in which the income of over 65% of households puts them below the poverty line and 35% of children do not attend school, the communities that benefit from the programme, though quite poor, have managed to improve health care, control common childhood illnesses, reduce malnutrition among children, prepare children successfully for primary school, implement integrated responses to other childhood problems and enhance noticeably the self-esteem and confidence of mothers. The highly structured programme is measurably effective in relative terms according to most standard indicators of child well-being.

Like all national offices of Christian Children's Fund, the one in Honduras (CCF-H), which is located in Tegucigalpa, the capital, exercises independent supervision over programme activities in the country. It transfers appropriate, easy-to-use tools and materials to its well-established local early childhood programmes. The approach is integrated. Raising basic literacy, boosting access to potable water and the provision of medical care, vocational training for youngsters and other training initiatives are among specific interventions. There is also a training module for personnel, and there are plans for the creation of a training institute.

The 55 local programmes cover 220 communities. Each programme is structured according to a standard model. An elected parents committee administers local funds and is in charge of the identification of the needs of children and families in the area, the establishment of workplan objectives and the implementation of specific initiatives. The existence of these committees ensures that mothers and fathers are the main community actors responsible for the welfare of children within the programme. A monitoring and evaluation system is used to implement yearly checks of the programmes to ensure accountability and follow-up.

From among volunteers, CCF-H and the communities select women who show leadership qualities, and CCF-H provides them with extensive (and on-going) instruction. Each of these women, who are known as *madres guías* ('guide mothers'), counsels an individual cluster of mothers in a half-dozen nearby households. The madres guías are trained to coach their clusters on proper child health care, nutrition, early childhood stimulation and educational practices. Throughout Honduras, nearly 2,000 madres guías monitor clusters of mothers who look after the health of around 23,000 children.

1 The core of this summary is based on CCF-H (2002).

The CCF-H programme includes two components: a home-based component and a centre-based pre-school component. The first component covers 0-to-3-year-olds. The madres guías visit their clusters of mothers twice a week in their homes to teach them early stimulation exercises for their children and other 'guided' activities that favour the proper development of children within traditional approaches. They also track the children's immunisations, nutritional status and general health and undertake twice yearly evaluations of each child's growth and development. The evaluations rely on a growth and development scale that Christian Children's Fund has adapted from monitoring techniques and indicators used by numerous organisations worldwide, notably UNICEF. The information contained in the evaluations is transparent so as to ensure that the programme is accountable to the families of the children, the communities, the Government, other non-governmental organisations and international donors.

The second component covers 4-to-6-year-olds at pre-school centres, where the children learn to socialise by interacting with their classmates, teachers and other community members. It is designed to help the children make the transition easily from home to pre-school. The women responsible for watching over the children in the pre-schools are known as aides or *jardineras* ('gardeners', as, for example, 'kindergarten' or 'jardin des enfants'). The more than 165 jardineras are trained to build a child-friendly environment. They work in partnership with parents and community groups on health and nutrition issues and on the development of social and emotional competencies and cognitive and learning skills. They maintain records on each child that track various indicators of interest to the programme. The component has recently been extended into the early primary years to facilitate the transition of the children from the pre-schools to the primary school system.

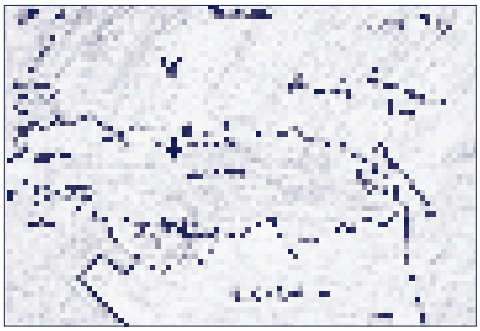
The need to coordinate the teaching elements in pre-school and the first year of primary school and to enhance the quality of formal education has led to the creation of supplementary activities that focus on sensory stimulation so as to take full advantage of the teaching-learning process. For example, in collaboration with a local non-governmental organisation, CCH-H supports a radio broadcast that focuses on the provision of child development messages. It also runs an initiative, 'Let's Learn Mathematics', to train teachers in the use of a specially prepared workbook that helps children learn mathematics in a dynamic, entertaining manner. Another initiative, called 'Dream Corners', involves a pleasant leisure environment containing children's books, all donated, and space set aside for other free-time pursuits.

The First Steps of the Effectiveness Initiative in Honduras

In October 1998, the international office of Christian Children's Fund, in Richmond, Virginia, obtained preliminary information from the Bernard van Leer Foundation about a proposal to analyse the effectiveness of early childhood programmes. The fund considered the possibility of the participation of CCF-H in this 'Effectiveness Initiative'.

In May 1999, a mission to Honduras was conducted by an EI expert to gain acquaintance with CCF-H. For its part, CCF-H showed interest in joining an effort that offered an opportunity to explore the strengths and weaknesses of its early childhood programme and discover programme areas with a possibility for improvement.

Two CCF-H representatives visited the headquarters of the Foundation in The Hague in mid-summer to learn more about the EI approach and meet the coordination team and representatives of other programmes involved in the EI. CCF-H agreed to take part in the EI and help in the formation of an EI team in Honduras.



CCF-H sent a representative to an EI regional meeting held in Guatemala City, Guatemala, in October 1999. The aim of the meeting was to gain a regional perspective on the EI, to start a process whereby EI programmes sharing the same language and compatible culture would exchange experiences and to identify common strategic elements.

The Foundation organised an international conference in The Hague on 11-12 November. CCF-H was represented. One of the aims of the conference was to introduce the EI to an international audience so as to obtain feedback.

In December 1999, La Huerta was selected as the EI pilot community in Honduras. It was chosen because it had been involved in the CCF-H programme for eight years and because of its location in Santa Bárbara, a mountainous department in north-western Honduras where there are many other programme communities. Most of these poor, rural communities are accessible only over difficult dirt roads.

A work strategy based on the EI analytical framework was prepared by CCF-H for La Huerta,[2] and, in January 2000, an EI team for the investigation in La Huerta was formed. In February, a member of the EI team went to live in La Huerta to begin documenting the daily lives of the local protagonists and lay some of the foundations for the activities. Later in the same month, an EI expert mission to Honduras included a field trip to La Huerta to examine the CCF-H early childhood programme in its community context, learn more about the perceptions and experiences of the community's madres guías, aides, teachers and parents committee and share with them and other stakeholders the EI philosophy, the EI analytical framework and some of the tools in the EI toolkit.

In March, more preparatory steps were taken for the information-gathering phase. This included contacts to ensure the participation of all protagonists and identify the specific role in the programme of each of the madres guías, parents, parents committee members, aides, teachers and pre-school and school children. Additional detailed planning was finalised at CCF-H headquarters in Tegucigalpa in April.

The Selection and Application of the EI Toolkit

Beginning in early 2000, the EI team sought to adopt or generate the most appropriate investigative tools from among the diversity of EI tools available. In this case, 'appropriate tools' meant those tools that would be most likely to foster a participative process that would be inclusive of all the protagonists of the early childhood programme in La Huerta and encourage them to communicate perspectives and supply useful, accurate information.

The tools were expected to assist the EI team in reviewing and understanding the relationships between adults and children in the family, the school and the community itself. A particular focus was information gathering among and about the madres guías as outstanding local programme facilitators.

2 See the general introduction.

One overriding aim was to use the tools to promote an environment that would offer the participating programme population new spaces to reflect on their actions, learn from their experiences and increase their sense of belonging by visualising how their work transforms them and those around them and, hence, improves the early childhood programme. The hope was that the tools would thereby strengthen the community's involvement in the programme and also help the community grow.

COURTESY OF CCF-H

Volunteers train as madres guías

The following tools were selected and applied during the exploration.

- *The river.* Like a river, the early childhood development programme in Honduras has a course or direction. As it flows from its source (the original motivation for the programme) to the ocean (its final manifestation), it is influenced by and has an effect on the many people, institutions and events it encounters.

  During an early exercise, a CCF-H working group was asked graphically to represent the early childhood programme as though it were a river. In this representation, the programme's problems and successes were to be pictured as though they were obstacles along the river or places where the river flowed peacefully.

  The act of creating the river stimulated lively discussions among the participants about key episodes and the major influences on and outcomes of the programme, and the tool opened a great deal of space for the exploration of perceptions about the programme's impact.
- *Roses and thorns.* In another early exercise, the madres guías were asked to discuss their contacts with children and families and other aspects of their work in the programme in terms of roses and thorns. The thorns are negative; they are obstacles and difficulties. The roses are positive; they are benefits and achievements.
- *The mural.* It was possible to record the 'voices' of school children by assisting them in making a wall mural using various symbols and figures to depict the community. They were then questioned about the features they chose to highlight, including characteristics of the children themselves, parents, aides, teachers and institutions. The murals were very useful in encouraging the children to express themselves clearly and freely.
- *Fishing.* Fishing was a metaphor in a game during which parents, madres guías, or school children used spontaneous associations to discover meanings in concepts and images.
- *Looking at images.* Pre-school children were shown various images that were relevant to the early childhood programme or the community. They were then asked to describe what they saw. They were encouraged to provide detail.
- *Interviews.* Interviews with fixed questions or semi-structured interviews were conducted among CCF-H personnel, external consultants and current and former madres guías and parents committee members.
- *Card games.* The madres guías were supplied with a pack of small cards, on each of which had been written a statement about one of their duties or responsibilities in the early childhood programme or some other aspect of their special relationship with the

community. The cards were distributed one by one, and the statements were discussed. The goal was to help the madres guías acquire a deeper understanding of the role they play in the community.

- *Survey.* The survey was a complex tool involving several stages, including training in survey methods among the madres guías who conducted the survey among the clusters.
- *The album.* Madres guías were asked to put together albums containing written and visual material on their experiences in the early childhood programme, the characteristics of a madre guía and the motivations that guide the work of a community volunteer.

Some of the EI tools were already being applied in February 2000, but the field information-gathering process began in earnest in La Huerta in April and continued through to December. (See the timetable.)

The Timetable for the Application of the Tools, 2000

Month	Tool	Activity	Protagonists
February	the river	charting the programme history	CCF-H working group
March	roses and thorns	making a living image of a madre guía	madres guías
April	the mural	presenting images of the community	school children
April	fishing	making images of the madre guía concept, generating stories about madres guías	madres guías
May	fishing	listening to children	school children
May	fishing	listening to parents	parents
May	looking at images	children express their opinions	pre-school children
May-July	interviews	structured and semi-structured interviews	La Huerta inhabitants (active and inactive madres guías, current and former parents committee members, programme personnel)
June-July	interviews	structured and semi-structured interviews	external consultants
July	card games	exploring the importance of tasks	madres guías
July-August	survey*	seeking opinions	madres guías, mother clusters
November-December	the album**	form a profile of a madre guía	madres guías

* There were several steps in the survey process. (See the text for an explanation.)

** The album tool was not included in the original calendar. (See the text.)

First Results

In April 2000, preliminary data were obtained through the application of tools, including stories and concepts collected among madres guías during the 'fishing' exercise, murals made by school children and representing the La Huerta community, and the first results of the 'roses and thorns' exercise among madres guías. A selection of these results are supplied below.

Stories we have learned, stories we have lived

'We, as madres guías, have learned what is written in the manuals in order to share it with the children's mothers. . . .

'The child is shy, but . . . is starting to learn more . . . . We, the madres guías, felt shy when we first arrived in the mother clusters because we did not know how to work with children. But, thank goodness, we have now learned how to work with children and their mothers. We feel more confident because the child shows more interest in learning new things . . . .

'The mothers now are not reluctant anymore; they cooperate with us . . . . We, as madres guías, advise them that [the CCF-H programme] is a support for us and the children because, when there was no [pre-school centre], there were no [school] meals, washtubs, or latrines; we did not have potable water, and some people did not have homes of their own.'

– Madres Guías EI Working Group 4, La Huerta, April 2000

'We, as madres guías, like to work with boys and girls . . . . The most beautiful experience that we have lived is what children tell us: the madre guía comes; we start playing, and children start to develop . . . through the activities we teach them. That is why we like to visit the families very much . . . .'

– Madres Guías EI Working Group 4, La Huerta, April 2000

'One day, I went to visit a family from my cluster. They received me happily, and the child came out and greeted me very happily, and he told me that he liked to weigh himself . . . , and I came into the house. It was very clean, and the mother told me that she liked to perform the early stimulation activities . . . because they awakened the child's knowledge. . . .

'We like to have meetings very much. We feel very happy when the mother supports them [the children], and we like to share learning with our mother clusters.

'And we like to receive visits from the educators because they teach us things that we did not know in order . . . to contribute to our children's future . . . .'

– Madres Guías EI Working Group 5, La Huerta, April 2000

Roses and thorns in the life of a madre guía

In the descriptions madres guías provided of their surroundings and their lives through the images of roses and thorns, their focus was obviously on the children, not only their own sons and daughters, but also the children in the families in their clusters. Children are the source of their pride. The children are always portrayed smiling, clean, well dressed and well cared for. The images show that the families have placed their trust in the madres guías.

Following are some of the most common impressions about their work that emerged through the application of the roses and thorns tool among madres guías.

Self-esteem and solidarity: 'When we have learned to value ourselves for what we are, think and feel, and when we have learned to respect ourselves, we have also learned that we must help others.'

Early stimulation: 'We can support children's growth and development if we are capable of recognising the ability children have to perform the activities proper to their age and, if this is not the case, of helping them obtain this ability.'

The madres guías say: 'I am helping a girl to walk.' 'Mothers have understood that it's good for their children.' 'Children are more alert because of us, the madres guías.' 'The child becomes happy when he sees me coming.' 'As a madre guía, I like to share with children.' 'I like to work with children because the activities are very entertaining; even the families participate in the activities with children.' 'As a madre guía, I like to play with children, to talk with them.'

They also say: 'All the things that I have done have come out very well. My co-workers have helped me do what I could not [do alone].' 'I am happy being a madre guía because I help others.' 'I like working with children, and I have learned a lot by being a madre guía.' 'They welcome me and trust me.' 'There is love in families now because they recognise the work [that has been] done.'

Community training and participation: When the madres guías use the growth development scale and help mothers and families become interested in learning to take care of their children's health, welfare and safety, they are contributing to the growth and normal development of their children.

Nutrition: By checking the children's weight and diet, the madres guías are helping the children maintain proper growth and physical and mental development.

The madres guías say: 'They [the mothers] are on time when I invite them to check their children's weight.' 'With the support of the families, I've been able to help children overcome malnutrition.'

They also say: 'When I arrived, they sat with me so I could tell them what they had to do for their children.' 'I like to speak to families and share my work with them.' 'The family is willing to participate.' 'As a madre guía, I've been able to communicate with the families.' 'Families are glad when I visit them.' 'Two families are like two roses, by God's grace.'

Health: Because they have learned to recognise the health problems caused by diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections and can prevent other illnesses by maintaining the children's vaccination programme, the madres guías contribute to the welfare of the children.

The madres guías say: 'When I talk to them [families] about health, they pay a lot of attention and put it into practice.' 'Families cooperate when we invite them to meetings about health.' 'As soon as I started teaching them about hygiene, I started to see changes.'

Behaviour and attitudes: Sometimes, the behaviour of the madres guías causes suspicion. However, the energy the madres guías show in doing their work well lends credibility to their determination and adds value to the outcomes. The madres guías attempt to remain positive and believe that it is important in life to face challenges and overcome difficulties. The madres guías make an effort to understand that, because everyone is different, people respond differently to situations. They try not to allow negative attitudes to affect their work, especially because they know their work is appreciated by many and benefits many more.

The madres guías say: 'In the beginning, families did not want to cooperate in project

activities.' 'I used to have problems with some families, but they changed their attitude when they realised [the work] benefited their children.' 'I have a problem with a family because they do not appreciate what I teach.' 'Some families didn't want to work; they don't boil the water, and they don't clean the house.' 'The problem came up when I got pregnant, and, the day that I gave birth, I could not attend the training, but I've kept on.'

Cross-Checking Results

In May 2000, a specialist in early childhood development was hired to review the information gathered that month through the 'fishing' activity among first- and second-year school children and during the 'looking at images' activity among pre-school children. The consultant provided a different perspective on the results, offered insights into behavioural and emotional patterns among the children and made several useful recommendations.

During the same month, members of the Honduran team participated in an EI workshop in Porto, Portugal. For the Honduran team, the workshop represented an opportunity to acquire technical support, gain information on tools and methodologies, compare qualitative information and identify means of communication with other teams.

From July to September, the cross-checking of the initial results obtained through the application of the tools was undertaken. (See the timetable.) These results were presented in graphic form to the groups that had participated in the original information-gathering process. The objective of the sessions was to test the results of the study through intense discussions. Complementary goals were to stimulate additional participation by protagonists in the tool activities, to obtain fresh comments, opinions and perceptions and to offer public recognition to the madres guías, children and parents for their efforts during the investigation.

The Timetable for the Cross-Checking Process, 2000

Day/Month	Tool	Workshop/Activity	Protagonists
July	survey*	creation of the survey manual	CCF-H working group
14 August	fishing	images of the madre guía concept, stories about madres guías	madres guías, mother clusters
17-18 August	the mural	images of the community	school children
20-23 August	fishing	listening to parents	parents, madres guías
21 August	fishing	listening to children	school children
30 August	survey*	seeking opinions	madres guías, mother clusters

* There were several steps in the survey process. (See text for an explanation.)

An Example of a Methodological Manual: The Survey

In the CCF-H programme, a ceremony is conducted to highlight the moment when qualified local women volunteers become madres guías. They are each given bags of simple objects to be used in the early stimulation activities among the children in their clusters. They are also presented with manuals that contain instructions, descriptions and explanations concerning the activities they will carry out within the early childhood programme, including sample growth and development charts and practical guidelines on health care, nutrition, early

childhood stimulation and education.

This ceremony is full of symbolism that resonates within the local culture. Thus, because the illiteracy rate is high in many CCF-H communities in Honduras, the transfer and possession of the manuals communicate a particularly meaningful status on the madres guías. The manuals are perceived as 'books of truth'. The ceremony therefore not only legitimises the new role of these women. It also automatically heightens the importance of the women within the community and reflects the trust that they are to enjoy among mothers.

For this reason, the EI team in Honduras adopted similar manuals for the exploration in La Huerta. Specifically, methodological manuals were created to organise and guide the application of the EI tools that were key elements in the process to plumb perceptions and opinions. This helped focus the study systematically so as to avoid improvisations and incomplete results, thereby giving the EI team the opportunity to obtain more accurate impressions.

Each methodological manual had precise objectives and was prepared in two steps. First, the number of participants, the length of the activity and the goals of the work were determined. Second, all phases of the study process were planned out, including the selection of the tools that would most aptly suit the goals of the particular investigation and the cross-checking, analysis and distribution of the results.

An example is an illustrated manual introduced for the survey among mothers in La Huerta. The manual was prepared in July 2000. The survey itself occurred in August, and the results were cross-checked at the end of that month. The survey manual is summarised below.

Participants: 36 madres guías and selected mothers from the clusters.

Length of the activity: two and a half weeks.

Objectives: to ensure that the madres guías of La Huerta participate and become directly involved in the EI and to promote a survey among the madres guías and their mother clusters in order to evaluate the early childhood programme and learn the opinions of the interviewees about the advantages and disadvantages of the programme.

Methodology: To guarantee the success of the survey, three phases are proposed: training, the implementation of the survey and the presentation and assessment of the results.

First phase, training: Training will be carried out among the madres guías to prepare them for the implementation of the survey by means of simulation exercises on the drafting and recording of survey questions. During the simulation, the following issues should be examined by the madres guías among the mother clusters: 'How are we seen?', 'Who are we?', 'What do we do?', 'How do we do it?' and 'Why do we do it?'.

Specific questions to elicit responses clarifying these issues might include: 'What is the name of your madre guía?', 'What do you think of her?', 'Why does your madre guía visit you?', 'What is the most important aspect of the work of the madres guías?', 'What do you talk about with your madre guía?' and 'How has the work of your madre guía helped you and your children?'.

The interviewees may be asked to provide examples to illustrate and clarify the responses they have given regarding the work of the madres guías.

Second phase, survey implementation: Once the training process has been completed, the madres guías will receive all the necessary materials to carry out the survey. A week will be set aside for the interviews. CCF-H technical staff and educators will choose the mother cluster that will interview each madre guía. Every madre guía will interview a mother from a different

cluster and, if possible, from another area so that the process possesses a built-in control and insures that the information gathered is objective and reliable. To facilitate data interpretation, the EI team, along with the educators, will fill out the form with the profile of the madre guía containing data on the identity of the madre guía, her family, the amount of time she has been involved in the programme and so on. To facilitate the transportation of the madres guías to the remotest areas of the programme, visits should be planned in advance and include, if possible, a social gathering.

Third phase, the presentation and assessment of the results: When the week assigned for the survey has ended, the madres guías will meet again to examine and analyse the survey results.

CCF-H, LUIS MÉNDEZ

Fishing for 'qualitative' information

The Organisation and Analysis of the EI Outcomes

In August and September 2000, two specialists of the Bernard van Leer Foundation visited Honduras to undertake a preliminary examination of the outcomes of the EI, identify potential factors in the effectiveness of the early childhood development programme and carry out a field trip to participate in a data cross-checking session. The specialists recommended that the information which had been collected should initially be organised by means of various ad hoc 'matrixes'.

Over the following months, the data were organised and analysed in stages. (See the table.) First, each piece of data was referred to at least one of the matrixes that had been selected. 'Objectives', 'participants', 'a finding', 'a lesson', 'an observation', 'a description' and 'the tool used' are examples of some of the matrixes. Each matrix was, in effect, a fixed identifier according to which a set of data could be linked or cross-referenced.

The Scheme for Data Organisation and Analysis

Method	Activity	Protagonists
Transcription	recovery of the raw information	EI team
Matrix	initial organisation of the information	EI team
Specialist perspective	addition of other views of the information	consultants
Categorisation by topic	further organisation and deeper analysis	EI team

Representatives from Honduras attended an EI workshop at the Bernard van Leer Foundation in The Hague in October. At the workshop, information was shared on the data-

gathering tools and the data analysis techniques being employed by the various EI teams.

A test application of the 'album', a new tool, was carried out in La Huerta in November and December. The album facilitated the collection and presentation of written and visual information on the personalities, motivations and personal experiences of a sample of madres guías. Albums were created on nine madres guías during the test.

A social anthropologist was hired as a consultant in January and February 2001 to review the study outcomes and supply additional insights into the comments, preferences and hopes expressed by protagonists, to define new ways to cross-check with these people the information they had provided and to enhance the ability of the EI team to verify and analyse results. The consultant drafted a report that supported the EI team's approach and made recommendations that enriched the data analysis. The consultant also offered an assessment of the album as an appropriate tool for the construction of a profile of the madre guía.

During February, the matrixes were refined, and a plan was developed to update them, improve the graphics employed in the toolkit, undertake more intensive data analysis and structure the final investigative product so as to encourage a wider distribution of the results. The plan was reviewed in early March by an external consultant, who proposed that the data should be organised according to thematic areas or topics. This proposal was received positively, and, from March to May, the data were re-analysed according to the categories. The categories were: 'child development', 'sustainability', 'motivation', 'participation', 'empowerment and self-esteem', 'leadership', 'gender', 'training', 'capacity-building', 'communication', 'organisation' and 'evaluation, follow-up and monitoring'.

During the rest of 2001, the analysis was continued and improved and the products of this first phase of the EI were prepared. In the following year, the next phase of the EI – the distribution of the results – began within CCF-H and other, similar organisations. The main audience was other communities involved in the EI, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, related governmental and non-governmental organisations, universities, specialised child development institutions, and institutions of bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Two of the main products – the qualitative profile of the madre guía and the qualitative analysis by thematic area – are now briefly described.

The Qualitative Profile of the Madres Guías

The investigation, particularly the albums showing aspects of the lives and experiences of these special women, permitted the construction of a qualitative profile of a typical madre guía. In general, the madre guía is a woman who is positive, responsible, patient, generous and able to work in a team. She trusts in her abilities and her knowledge. She loves children, helps others and communicates well. She shares her knowledge and experiences, values education and does not like to waste time. She is a leader who is accepted and respected by the community.

Although it shows in different ways, the abilities of the madres guías are recognised by others. Some of the women are more active. Some are more talkative. Some are more creative. Some hold the hands of the mothers and walk at their pace.

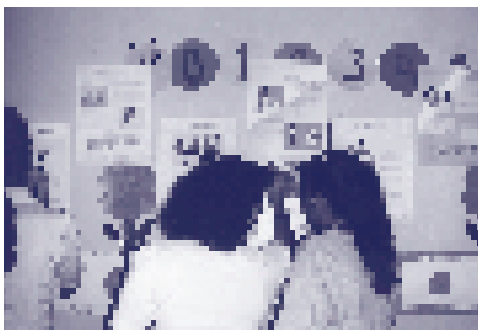
The motivations of the madres guías are many and diverse, but there are trends. Being a madre guía offers a woman the opportunity to improve her reading and writing skills, learn more about childraising and child development, receive training and make new friends.

Being a madre guía allows a woman to emphasise the importance of the family. She considers the family an indivisible unit and cares about the welfare of all its members. She

values the participation of parents in the education of their children.

The role the madres guías play in the community stimulates them to appreciate the benefits of primary education, seek and support new educational opportunities for children in pre-schools and other schools and improve living conditions by means of the training they obtain.

The madre guía's religious beliefs support her vocation for service because, by showing her faith, she gains the strength to do her work and the inspiration to live a good life. She believes that working for the welfare of children is a mandate from God.



BVLF, RUTH COHEN

Madres guías discuss roses and thorns

The title 'madre guía' is a source of pride because it represents a recognition of a woman's knowledge about the upbringing of children, health care and family welfare. It likewise gives her status within the community. She becomes an example for others. Being chosen is an honour that marks her before the community as a good mother.

The Qualitative Analysis by Thematic Area

The exploration proposed by the EI on the early childhood development programme that CCF-H is implementing in Honduras was a great challenge for the EI team, with many satisfying moments, unexpected experiences and a particularly intensive process of awareness-building. Looking for the elements of effectiveness was not an easy task since the team limited itself to observation without additional interpretation, to the recognition that they would not reach a universal truth and to accepting that their descriptions occurred in a particular place at a particular time and that the situation would change.

While early childhood development was recognised as the essence of the programme, the study tended to focus on the work of the madres guías. This circumstance should not seem contradictory. It ought to be remembered that the effectiveness of the programme was not under evaluation. Rather, the goal was to discover what made the programme effective. In other words, the objective was not to examine *whether* and *to what extent* the programme was effective by seeking confirmation that early childhood development was being enhanced (through evidence from the growth and development scales, for instance), but to learn *why* the programme was effective. The work of the madres guías was clearly an innovative instrument of the programme and appeared to be one of the key factors in the programme's effectiveness.

On this basis, the data were analysed to reveal thematic areas or categories according to which they could be reasonably organised. A general definition for each category or thematic area was then devised in order to facilitate associations among the areas.

One resource that helped in orienting the search for meanings and the interpretation of the data findings was

BVLF, ELAINE MENOTTI

Children of La Huerta

the formulation of 'wild hypotheses'. These were conjectures, suggestions and proposals for general statements that awoke among the analysts to explain the pieces of data they were examining. They were trial hypotheses that seem to take account of a wider range of data. The wild hypotheses thus function as a map to assist in the verification of the findings.

In the brief outline provided here, the various wild hypotheses are listed by thematic area. Each wild hypothesis is preceded by the concrete data evidence with which it is linked.

Child development

The CCF-H early childhood development programme involves an integrated approach that is based on three assumptions, as follows.

- The provision of personal attention to the child means that parents are enabled to supply early stimulation, health care, nutrition and psychosocial development opportunities.
- Training helps guarantee that parents adequately care for, educate and raise their children so as to enrich the lives and welfare expectations of the children.
- Actions at the community level aimed at improving the environment, the educational system and community health inevitably have a positive impact on children.

Evidence: The community and family participate in all the programme's activities to favour the comprehensive welfare of the child. *Hypothesis:* CCF-H values the child as a human being having rights that should be respected and needs that should be satisfied by the family and community. The child is not viewed as an individual in isolation.

Evidence: The poverty of the programme's beneficiary communities mean that health, nutrition and education are priorities. Nonetheless, the madres guías are trained in areas pertaining to the emotional and social development of the child. They are qualified to advise parents on the early stimulation and psychosocial development of the child and to discuss the importance of relationships and communication. *Hypothesis:* The programme includes and considers topics such as early stimulation very valuable. The programme has an approach that tends to be integrated.

Evidence: Culture and tradition govern some aspects of the relationship between parents and children, including routine feeding patterns, choices between the behaviours that are tolerated and those that are punished and household economic management. *Hypothesis:* Early childhood programmes should not ignore cultural practices within communities.

Evidence: Early stimulation activities are viewed as a resource for the improvement of a child's learning capacity and general welfare. For the madres guías, it is also a resource to help children overcome physical and emotional problems. A great deal of time is devoted to these activities. *Hypothesis:* In a community development programme, the importance of an activity in an early childhood programme is determined by prevailing welfare conditions. The importance assigned to an activity can be gauged by the amount of time devoted to it.

Sustainability

The sustainability of the CCF-H programme is not determined so much by its material resources as by its framework, including a global human development concept involving training opportunities, community participation and the commitment of the beneficiaries.

Programme activities are directed at achieving a change in attitude and greater understanding among parents and in the communities in general. The programme seeks to become part of the lives of the protagonists.

Evidence: The programme focuses on the complete development of the children among extremely poor populations. It combines childcare and long-term actions designed to address problems of a basic nature. Thus, it provides health care services (vaccines, medical care, weight monitoring and so on), essential services such as sanitation and potable water, and training in areas of immediate need such as nutrition and primary education. *Hypothesis:* In order to ensure the sustainability of a programme's achievements, basic childhood needs must be covered, but also actions aimed at promoting the child's overall physical and mental welfare, such as basic education, the formation of values and literacy.

BVLF, ELAINE MENOTTI

. . . promoting the child's mental development

Evidence: The madres guías are the core of the programme. They transfer the knowledge they acquire to their oldest daughters. Some of the madres guías are grandmothers, and they use their knowledge in raising their grandchildren. This creates a multiplier effect within the programme. *Hypothesis:* A programme based on participation is sustainable if the knowledge is transferred among the participants and across generations.

Evidence: The effectiveness of the training system implemented through the programme is evident in changes in attitude and the use of the new knowledge by the beneficiaries in their daily lives. The madres guías use information and knowledge to improve the living conditions of those under their care. *Hypothesis:* Systematic training results in the acquisition of knowledge by the madres guías, but also the entire community.

Evidence: The madres guías are committed to home visits. At training sessions, the attendance and participation of all the actors involved in the programme are evident. The child is the focus of planning activities. *Hypothesis:* Children and their welfare are the focus of the interest of the community and CCF-H. This common objective helps the community identify with the programme.

Evidence: The parents committees have authority to register signatures at the banks where payments are made, to make payments and purchases and to offer incentives to the madres guías. The madres guías and the community in general have translated the basics of the programme into their own language. They now understand the technical terms used in childhood development, nutrition and health care. *Hypothesis:* An organisational policy of sharing responsibility helps a community become active in the implementation of a programme. Programmes that assign direct responsibility to community members stimulate their initiative and encourage their commitment in the solution of community problems.

Motivation

The programme's effectiveness and the success of its activities are determined by the enthusiasm and trust of the protagonists. The consciousness of their priority needs can drive the protagonists to become involved in the search for ways to realise their own development. By discovering their ability to find solutions to their problems, the protagonists legitimise their own potential. In this sense, the programme promotes positive, individual talents that represent permanent, sustainable acquisitions among the participants.

Evidence: The madres guías are aware of the usefulness of their work with children, which helps them become community leaders. *Hypothesis:* In community programmes, a group's identity and sense of belonging are motivational factors in participation.

Evidence: Through the various training opportunities offered by the programme, the madres guías have developed a sense of responsibility towards the community. The madres guías have come to understand the usefulness of the knowledge they have acquired in the programme. They can now easily recognise their successes and failures and their capabilities and limitations. *Hypothesis:* A programme can represent an opportunity to recover the natural talents of community members.

Evidence: By teaching useful, practical skills to families, the madre guía have become greatly appreciated by the mothers in the community. *Hypothesis:* By offering them the opportunity to become responsible parties in the protection and development of the children in the community, the programme provides the madres guías with an incentive to become committed to voluntary work.

Evidence: The madres guías and the parents showed the ability to understand the abstract concepts involved in the programme and the EI. *Hypothesis:* The qualitative investigation generated opportunities for the protagonists to translate abstract concepts into their own language.

Participation

Community participation requires that the programme implementation process stress individual capabilities and allow the protagonists to improve their living conditions and the well-being of their families and communities regardless of religion, sex, or race. This is an intrinsic component of the programme in Honduras.

Evidence: Manuals, printed administrative guidelines and annual workplans aimed at madres guías and local educators represent important resources that help the programme function properly. This contributes to the more active participation of the entire community. *Hypothesis:* In community programmes, the existence of written rules and guidelines regarding the participation of community members in the election of board members and other administrators is important in guaranteeing effectiveness.

Evidence: The community participates in the selection of the madres guías. The madres guías take part in the parents committee, which is an administrative post. Committee members are elected by vote. *Hypothesis:* The selection of the madres guías and the parents committees represents opportunities for the programme organisers to use negotiation and decision-making as a tool to encourage and enhance participation.

Empowerment and self-esteem

CCF-H does not impose the empowerment of people or seek to rouse the self-esteem of the madres guías as a deliberate goal of the early childhood programme. However, mothers are obviously learning new and better methods for bringing up their children through the programme, and they are also obviously learning to value who they are and what they think and feel. Women have seized the opportunity to grow personally and collectively, and community solidarity has thereby emerged.

Evidence: The participation of the madres guías in the programme enhances their personal capabilities. The title of 'madre guía' is recognised by the community. *Hypothesis:* By being madres guías, the women reinforce their status within their families and, as contributors to community welfare, raise their self-esteem.

Evidence: The madres guías value their role within the programme and the community. The ceremony at which the madres guías receive the bags of materials and their handbooks and manuals legitimises this role. *Hypothesis:* The training in childcare improves the perception and value of the role of the madres guías.

Leadership

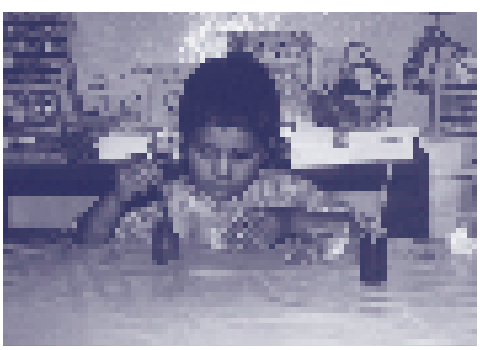
The leadership of the madres guías in their communities is not a deliberate goal of the CCF-H programme. The natural abilities of the madres guías are evident to all. This is the source of the people's trust and appreciation. The leadership of the madres guías arises because, through them, the knowledge and self-esteem of the community are gradually increasing.

Evidence: The community recognises the merits of the madres guías. In part, this is because the madres guías enhance traditional community approaches to childcare. *Hypothesis:* Programmes will more likely be successful if they are carried out by community members who respect local traditions, share local interests and use the same language.

Evidence: National vaccination, breastfeeding and disease-control campaigns in Honduras rely on the madres guías to achieve greater effectiveness. *Hypothesis:* The effectiveness of the madres guías within the early childhood programme is recognised because outside actors call on the madres guías in the implementation of other interventions directed at the welfare of children and families.

Gender

The focus on gender is apparent in many of the reactions of the men and women involved in the early childhood programme. Gender inequalities and differences are still evident, but, because of the programme, some people, especially men, are changing their attitudes towards gender roles in the family and the community. The opportunity offered through the programme for women to raise the level of their education and to acquire knowledge is helping to reduce gender inequalities. Women's work within



COURTESY OF CCF-H

Painting corn in San Rafael

their homes and in their communities is also being valued more fairly.

Evidence: The community values the work of the madres guías. This is creating new opportunities for women in positions of responsibility within the programme. *Hypothesis:* The programme is changing attitudes towards gender and opening new spaces for a more active participation of women in family and community life.

Evidence: At the beginning of the programme, the consent of husbands and fathers was necessary before women could become madres guías. The madres guías and the mother clusters have assumed responsibility for the childhood development interventions in the programme communities, and the fathers have learned about the value of the work of the madres guías during their home visits. There is less resistance towards women's participation in the programme. *Hypothesis:* The madre guía is being recognised as an agent of change in the life and welfare of children and the family. Men are gradually becoming more receptive and understanding of the importance of the role of women in the family and the community.

Capacity-building

The programme aims to build the capacities of people so that, through their own efforts, they become the real protagonists of their own development. The process encourages the generation of new ideas, supports the initiative of individuals and communities and relies on local human resources. People are encouraged to develop their creativity and use their own resources to discover new solutions to local problems.

Evidence: The reliance on madres guías who use standardised approaches and act as trainers among the mother clusters guarantees the transfer of knowledge within the community. Moreover, all the people involved in the programme have regular opportunities to update their knowledge. *Hypothesis:* Capacity-building can occur because of a multiplier effect, whereby programme interventions, by their nature, involve the transfer of new knowledge even to programme populations exhibiting high rates of illiteracy.

Evidence: The manuals give credibility and status to the madres guías. They are perceived as 'books of truth'. H*ypothesis:* The existence of significant printed material supports capacity-building. Essential programme concepts can be portrayed through images. Capacity-building can occur through a process of visual assimilation.

Evidence: The madres guías express their ideas very appropriately in regards to early child development (qualitative data) and childhood welfare indicators, for example, infant mortality rates (quantitative data). This sort of knowledge and these methods can be readily transferred. *Hypothesis:* A programme can create a new culture for the care and education of children among mothers.

Evidence: The programme has had a positive effect in terms of closer relationships and better communication among protagonists. Because of the programme, there is a stronger sense of solidarity among families, particularly the women. *Hypothesis:* The benefits of training can extend beyond the transfer of knowledge and practical procedures. They may reinforce the importance of teamwork and the value of listening to the opinions of others.

Evidence: It is not common to observe adults, particularly fathers, playing with their children in rural areas. The madres guías help develop the motor, sensory, intellectual and social skills of children through play. The growth and development scales demonstrate the benefits of early stimulation. *Hypothesis:* Play can be used as a resource in children's learning activities. Play should be encouraged as an important means to facilitate the assimilation of knowledge.

Communication

COURTESY OF CCF-H

Decorating a matchbox in San Rafael

The programme possesses a multiplier effect because the participants perceive the positive changes that result from the efforts undertaken in common. Communication is essential to the multiplier effect. It helps consolidate individual and collective achievement. The exchange of experiences, supported by good example, can become an efficient, motivational strategy in the search for solutions to common problems. It is useful to link communities socially and to encourage the recognition of work well done.

Evidence: The structure of the CCF-H programme is well defined, and the administrative requirements have been set out clearly. However, CCF-H is also flexible and encourages dialogue among mothers, fathers, children, teachers and civil and religious leaders in order to promote understanding and consensus. *Hypothesis:* The existence of open, flexible channels of communication between programme organisers and community actors helps motivate participation and offers the opportunity to exchange useful messages.

Organisation

The success of CCF-H is due, in part, to its institutional respect for community organisations. The local programmes consist of community members who follow agreed plans of action. In this way, CCF-H ensures the credibility of the programmes among community members, who, in turn, can influence and participate more actively in programme decision-making at all levels.

Evidence: Management is responsible for defining and establishing strategies, while operational teams are in charge of the fieldwork. *Hypothesis:* The organisation must be flexible. Some parts must be hard and fast; others must be dynamic.

Evidence: The local organisational model of the programme involves parents and individual women and mothers as protagonists. The community recognises that the parents committee and the madres guías represent the programme's principal local structure and are fundamental to the programme goals. The relationships between the local programmes and the CCF-H are developed in an environment of trust and respect where everyone is responsible for certain duties. *Hypothesis:* In community programmes, trust between an organisation and a branch that are not close in physical terms can evolve if local support mechanisms are used in administration and planning for the branch.

Evaluation, follow-up and monitoring

The CCF-H early childhood programme employs a well-tested system to measure the quality and the impact of specific activities on a community or group. Through this system, which relies on observation, the collection of data and careful judgment to weigh the outcomes of the activities, CCF-H can determine whether there are significant, measurable changes in welfare conditions in a beneficiary community. This helps ensure that the programme fosters comprehensive development.

Evidence: Regular monitoring of the programmes and programme activities helps detect and correct planning and organisational problems early. *Hypothesis:* Regular monitoring and follow-up contribute to mutual trust among programme actors.

Evidence: The madres guías, educators, consultants, accountants and supervisors involved in the local programmes generate information that is useful in the measurement of the progress and achievements of the programme. The data produced at various organisational levels are employed to generate reliable performance indicators for pertinent, timely decision-making. *Hypothesis:* The programme monitoring and evaluation system is dynamic. This contributes to the effectiveness of programme policies and strategies, but also to the understanding of experiences and the lessons learned.

Impact of the EI

The effects of the EI, especially the re-invigorated participation and fresh learning encouraged by the application of the EI tools, were apparent in the CCF-H programme. Some of the tools have been adopted by the CCF-H in its initiatives. EI tools are now regularly applied among children in order to gain insights into their views and reactions.

The EI also helped the CCF-H and the local community stakeholders to gain a greater appreciation of the role and value of the madres guías as promoters of the well-being of children and families. It thus became evident that men had come to understand the tangible contributions their wives, as madres guías, were making to the community and that this had enhanced the standing of these women within the household. Likewise, CCF-H supervisors now tend to take more into account the opinions of these women in local programme decision-making. Much of the programme's effort at capacity-building is currently being conducted through the madres guías.

3. Enthusiasm in Ahmedabad

Among the several features that distinguish the Effectiveness Initiative in India, three stand out. First, the programme of the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) for day-care among the children of SEWA members has, for many years already, been employing tools that are similar to those in the EI toolkit. Second, SEWA chose to implement the EI principally as a capacity-building exercise among programme actors. Third, the EI team contained no SEWA outsiders. For these reasons, the EI makes only a brief appearance in the following text.[1]

The Textile Labour Association, India's oldest, largest union of textile workers, was founded in 1920 by Anasuya Sarabhai. Her inspiration for the union came from Mahatma Gandhi, who had supported a successful strike she had led among textile workers in 1917. She believed in creating positive organisational strength by awakening the consciousness of workers. Influenced by Gandhian ideas, she realised that, through the development of unity and self-reliance, a worker should become able to hold his or her own against injustice. To create this strength, the union became concerned with all aspects of the lives of workers, from the factory to the home.

The Women's Wing of the Textile Labour Association was created in 1954 with the aim of assisting the wives and daughters of mill workers. It focused largely on training and welfare activities. By 1968, classes in sewing, knitting, embroidery, spinning, press composition, typing and stenography were being held throughout Ahmedabad, a city in the state of Gujarat, western India, that had five million people and a thriving textile industry.

Ela R. Bhatt, a lawyer, began organising women workers for the Textile Labour Association in the late 1960s. Word spread of the effectiveness of the Women's Wing, which she headed, and it was proposed that informal women workers needed their own representative forum, preferably a membership organisation. At the initiative of Ela Bhatt and the president of the association, Arvind Buch, the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) was founded in December 1971 and was officially registered as a trade union in April 1972.[2]

Millions of women make up the bulk of the vast informal-sector labour force in India, the poorest of all working people in the country. Despite their active contribution to the economy and the long, hard hours, these women rarely enjoy the job security or regular, steady incomes of the workers in the formal sector. Health care, childcare, maternity benefits, sick leave, housing, insurance and pensions are not usually available to them.

SEWA thus grew at a tremendous rate and soon reached beyond the borders of Gujarat. Today, SEWA's collective strength is around 700,000 members, about one fourth of whom are outside Gujarat, in Bihar, Delhi, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The union has supported

BVLF, J. LEONARDO YÁNEZ

SEWA members praying according to Ghandian principles

1 The core of this summary is based on Anandalakshmy et al. (2003).
2 See the SEWA website, at <*www.sewa.org*>.

other worker organisations, cooperatives and self-help groups. The largest SEWA cooperative is the Mahila SEWA Bank in Ahmedabad, which provides microfinancing and other banking services to 200,000 women workers. In South Africa, Turkey and Yemen, SEWA has helped women form informal-sector worker organisations, thus spreading SEWA principles and showing that they have validity in other countries and cultures.

Gandhian strategies for action constitute the main guiding tenets of SEWA as a movement for social change and as a labour organisation among poor, self-employed women. These are the core values of *sathya* (truth), *ahimsa* (non-violence), *khadi* and *swadeshi* (the promotion of local employment and self-reliance), and *sarvadharma* (equal respect for all faiths and communities). The SEWA movement is enhanced by being a *sangam*, or confluence of three movements: a labour movement, a cooperative movement and a women's movement. SEWA's strategy stresses the joint actions of struggle and development: the raising of women's voices against injustice and, at the same time, the undertaking of constructive action for the well-being of poor working women.

The two main goals of SEWA for its members are full employment and self-reliance. Full employment means employment security, income security, food security and social security for all households. Self-reliance entails financial sustainability and autonomous decision-making and management among workers and their groups and organisations.

The Child in the Centre

> *'When our women members are asked what they want from their union or cooperative, they invariably ask for the provision of childcare. As a result, childcare has been one of the first support services provided to our members and their children.'*
>
> – Ela R. Bhatt (quoted in Anandalakshmy et al., 2003)

It became apparent from the responses of women around the country that a facility for young children was essential to help mothers working outside the home. Given the basic concept that the priorities and needs of the members necessarily shape the priorities and direction of the organisation, SEWA began to provide care for children. Very quickly, the care became more than merely custodial.

While their babies were in SEWA centres, the mothers could take up full-time work. The increase in working hours was often reflected in higher incomes and better food for the family. There was also an improvement in the children's health. The centres began relying on paramedical staff, getting the children immunised against communicable diseases and detecting children's illnesses at the very early stages. The number of children who had to be referred to doctors went down substantially.

For more than two decades now, 'releasing the girl child for school' has been one of the slogans in the expansion of childcare, the idea being that, if regular childcare could be furnished, not only could mothers be freed up to pursue steady work, but also older girls could be relieved of childcare duties so that they could attend school.

By 1984, SEWA was running about 20 childcare centres in Ahmedabad, and, in 1986, a cooperative for childcare was registered. In 1987, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation agreed to assist SEWA childcare centres, and, in 1989, Integrated Child Development Services began supplying material support.[3] Since 1989, in Kheda, a rural district in Gujarat, SEWA has been organising and operating crèches for the 0-to-3-year-old children of women working in the tobacco industry (eventually supplemented by care for 4-to-6-

BVLF, SARA GÓMEZ

Children playing tag and other games at the Khodiarnagar centre

year-olds). In 1993, in collaboration with the Gujarat Rural Labour Board, SEWA opened crèches for the children of agricultural labourers and salt farmers in Surendranagar and Patan, two impoverished, chronically drought-ridden districts.

In 1994, the Bernard van Leer Foundation was approached for support for SEWA's centres, and its positive response has kept many of the centres going since then. New centres were also established at that time. By 2002, SEWA programmes were caring for over 3,500 children in more than 50 centres in Ahmedabad and over 2,000 children in 70 centres in the Kheda, Patan and Surendranagar districts of Gujarat.

SEWA has been running childcare centres for children from birth to 6 for many years now, and the services have expanded and been strengthened. Thus, children are weighed regularly, and records of their growth are maintained in growth charts. They are given nutritious meals and snacks. There are also creative and educational activities, such as drawing, painting, clay modelling and crafts. The children are kept busy the entire day. If space at the centre permits, the teachers display the children's work. The teachers receive in-service training to enhance their ability to make the centres more stimulating for the children.

Now, each SEWA childcare centre receives a set of three sturdy, rip-proof cloth books made by SEWA members. Two are about animals, and one shows shapes of various colours and sizes.

3 Run by the Indian Government, Integrated Child Development Services manages over 40,000 centres nationwide and is the largest integrated early childhood programme in the world. It was established in 1975 and receives financial and technical support from UNICEF and the World Bank. The programme covers around 5 million expectant and nursing mothers and nearly 25 million under-6-year-olds.

The teachers use the books to lead talk among the children about the shapes and the animals around us in the world. Verses and songs taught to the children have also been compiled.

A prayer

My God is a small god.
He is the king of the universe.
He has climbed to the sky
And is standing there,
And, in the ocean, he sleeps.
Sweetly, he plays the flute,
And, on his ankles, anklets he wears.
With hands and feet, he dances beautifully.
He is the saviour of poor people.

A game

'Mor ude! Popet ude!' ('Peacocks fly! Parrots fly!') calls out Hemlataben, who has raised her hands above her head and is waving them. She sings out the names of animals that fly. Then, she names one, such as a cow, that does not.

'Na ude!' ('It doesn't fly!') the children are supposed to shout at that moment, while pulling down their hands quickly. It is an easy activity that gets everyone involved; the children know it well, and most of them join in immediately.

'What does a cow say?' The room fills with each child's version of the sound a cow makes. Hemlataben leads the exited children, asking about goats, cats and sparrows. The children imitate each animal, trying to make the sound it makes, filling the room with noise and laughter.

Hemlataben holds up the picture of a cow and begins to ask questions about it.

'What animal is this?' she asks. 'How many legs does it have? Where does it live?'

A dance

Veenaben takes hold of the drum and plays a beat to which the others can dance the *garba*, a traditional Gujarati dance. As they sing and dance, the children imitate the teacher's movements. They clap and twist to one side, leaning into the circle; then they take a few steps and clap and lean to the other side. Some of the children try to imitate the teachers, while others follow the movement of the group, clapping to the beat.

Savitaben sits down and takes over the drumming so that Veenaben can dance. They are joined by the owner of the house that is used as the childcare centre. At the opening of the courtyard, a small crowd has gathered, attracted by the sound of the singing and drumming.

When the drum is put away, the energy is high, so Hemlataben leads a game where the children can run around. As she sings, the children run around; they run until she sings out a number. If she announces the number two, each child is supposed to grasp onto one other child to make a group of two. If she announces three, they are supposed to make groups of three, and so on. When the song ends, the children

quickly take hold of each other, locked into little smiling group hugs. Hemlataben goes around pairing up the children who have not yet found partners with ones who have inadvertently made groups of four or five. As soon as everyone is in groups of the correct size, the song starts again, and the children run around in different directions until the next number is called.

A prayer

Together, we play.
Together, we eat.
Together, we do good work.
Together, we shall live in harmony.
In every being, the Lord dwells.
Om, shanti, shanti, shanti.

A woman in a purple sari enters the courtyard. She has come to pick up the boy who is still sleeping in the cradle outside. She has come a long way, from Vadaj, where she has been selling vegetables. She picks up her son and carries him over to the washing area to clean his face. As the time gets closer to five o'clock, the children play on their own, and the teachers clean up and get ready to take the children back to their homes.

– Events at a SEWA centre in Chamanpura, Ahmedabad

Capacity-Building is Learning Together

By the mid-1990s, it had become apparent that the objective of the provision of basic childcare to the children of SEWA members was being met, but that more inputs were required to improve the quality of the care. The growth and development of the children had to be enhanced as much as possible; financial efficiency had to be fostered since the centres needed supplementary funds to function appropriately, and the management had to be strengthened.

Enhancing child growth and development

In 1997, SEWA set up a childcare technical team to gather and evaluate the knowledge and skills needed for proper childcare and child development and transfer them to SEWA centre workers. The first technical team had 24 members, including *aagewans* (grass-roots women leaders), teachers, supervisors and coordinators from districts where centres were located.

The technical teams meet once a month to share experiences and test new ideas. Child development experts, nutritionists and paediatricians, as well as people who work with children with special needs, are invited. When the teachers and aagewans actually implement changes or incorporate

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Children in a SEWA crèche

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Veenaben comforts a child while talking to one of the other teachers

new ideas, others in the district observe the new activity and may be inspired to follow suit. There can be a ripple effect.

In another initiative, *sammelans* (large gatherings of mothers) were organised in Ahmedabad and in Kheda district. The purpose was to let mothers know the objectives of SEWA childcare activities and SEWA's approach to childhood development. The sammelans also provided an opportunity for mothers to meet each other and the childcare team, to share their views and to offer suggestions on ways the SEWA centres could serve them better. Around 2,000 mothers came to the Ahmedabad sammelan, and hundreds of mothers came to the sammelan in Kheda.

Other steps taken in the effort at building capacity have included a small-scale nutrition study carried out among SEWA members and their children in nine districts and in Ahmedabad. The study found that SEWA members eat nutritiously in terms of the balance between proteins and other nutrients, but that they do not eat sufficient quantities. There were more cases of undernutrition than malnutrition.

Through the study, an idea was obtained of the nutrition deficiencies of working families. Husbands and younger children always eat first, while women and adolescent girls eat later and often have less to eat. However, the study did not find that, within the families, boys were preferred over girls in the quantity or quality of the food they received.

By and large, mothers were unaware of methods to raise nutrition intake at no extra cost by varying easily available ingredients or preparing them differently. Mothers rarely introduced gruels, rice and lentil mixtures or mashed vegetables in soups in the diets of their infants even at 6 months of age. Children with special needs, such as the physically challenged, were not given particular attention during mealtimes.

Because of the study, SEWA undertook a nutrition information campaign within a health education initiative during meetings with mothers, aagewans and teachers. Posters were produced and widely distributed to persuade families to eat together and share the same foods, to publicise the utility of giving infants supplementary foods, in addition to breastmilk, starting at 4 or 5 months of age, to provide special care in feeding children who are physically challenged and to enhance nutrition through the use of methods to increase food value.

Childcare is not considered by government to be a basic need, and so there are few institutional sources of funding. Self-employed women are willing to pay for trained childcare that includes meals, but their ability to pay falls short of the costs. An awareness of costs and resource availability is therefore important for all SEWA centre staff if the childcare programme is to be sustainable.

Efforts to create such awareness began within the technical team. A pie-chart, called a '*rotlo*' (the traditional flat wheat or millet bread), was used to show how costs could be broken down. The rotlo was easy for everyone to understand, and teachers, aagewans and mothers gained a better idea of the costs involved in running a centre. This prompted them to seek contributions from parents, other SEWA members, employers, farmers, local village leaders, government schemes and private trusts. The result of the exercise was an increase in the contributions in cash and in kind from all the districts.

Strengthening management and finance

District-level spearhead teams have been functioning since 1998. Each team consists of three to five aagewans who are selected from among SEWA members. The spearhead team leader is a SEWA organiser who focuses on childcare.

The spearhead team promotes the leadership of local women who are the users and managers of activities and programmes such as childcare and, eventually, of their own worker organisations, cooperatives, or district economic associations. The team takes responsibility for running the childcare centres in its district. This involves visits to monitor the centres, monthly meetings with teachers, weekly meetings with local and district childcare coordinators and supervisors, assessments of financial viability and of the potential of workers to take over the management of childcare programmes, the provision of supplies and medical services, and the establishment of new centres, including site selection and the related contacts with the local *sarpanch* (elected headman).

The management of childcare cooperatives has also been part of the capacity-building inputs. Childcare activities in Ahmedabad and in Kheda district are run by two worker-owned and managed cooperatives, Sangini and Shaishav, respectively. Each has an elected board of crèche teachers, two of whom are office-bearers: president and secretary of the cooperative.

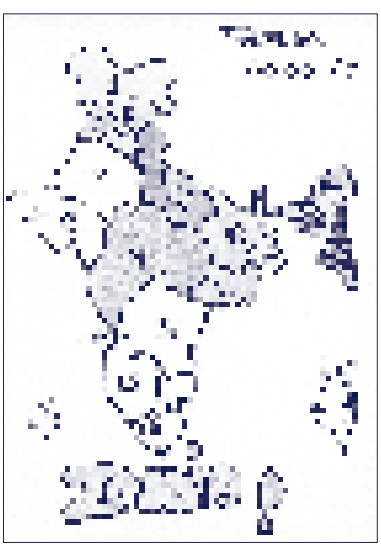
Through the Gujarat State Women's Cooperative Federation, which has been supported by SEWA and of which both Sangini and Shaishav are members, regular training sessions on cooperative management have been organised for officers and other board members. They have learned methods for keeping proper, detailed minutes during meetings, maintaining account books and filing records. A more systematic, three-year programme for capacity-building and management was initiated by the federation in March 2002.

Linking with the Effectiveness Initiative

In 1998, SEWA began discussions with the Bernard van Leer Foundation to join the Effectiveness Initiative. For SEWA, the EI represented an opportunity to expand its efforts at capacity-building among childcare teachers and supervisors, as well as mothers. It was felt that the EI would give the effort more space and time in order to experiment with new methods and processes to promote childhood development.

The EI process in SEWA was called '*Utsah*', which, in Hindi, Gujarati and many other Indian languages, translates as 'zest' or 'enthusiasm'. This term, in the view of SEWA, sums up the impact of the EI on the programme.

Through the EI, SEWA childcare workers were exposed to creative methods for working with children and promoting all-round development. All childcare team members became engaged in capacity-building initiatives that were active and interactive and that were designed to encourage the teachers, aagewans, supervisors and coordinators to explore their talents to the fullest. It was thus also an exercise in self-development. At all times, the efforts were geared towards methods and activities that could enhance the abilities of the children.



Capacity-building involved strengthening the observation and communication skills of centre staff. Accurate writing and reporting were emphasised in order to share relevant experiences and identify and describe initiatives that were effective. Clarity and accuracy were crucial.

While concentrating on moving forward, the EI also inspired SEWA to look backwards at its accomplishments and to seek to recover useful methods that had been abandoned and forgotten. This was the way the EI unfolded in India.

To be Effective, Lend a Hand

> *'Exactly four weeks later [following the earthquake], I returned to Surendranagar . . . with the SEWA childcare team. As we walked around the villages, we realised that a substantial part of the rubble had been sorted out. Quietly, the people had started rebuilding their lives, saving what could be saved. It was March 20, and already the people had closed the chapter on the January disaster and were planning for the months ahead. We saw no tears, confronted no self-pity.'*
>
> – From Anandalakshmy (2001)

The history of SEWA must include reference to several natural crises faced by women at SEWA. In 1998, a cyclone hit the coast of Gujarat. Thousands of people were swept away, and many more lost their livelihoods. The homes of SEWA members in Surendranagar and Patan were affected, and the childcare centres there had to be closed for some days.

Close on the heels of the cyclone came two years of crippling drought. Many families, especially in the dry desert districts of Surendranagar and Patan, migrated in search of work. Then, in July 2000, the heaviest rainfall in 50 years inundated the homes of SEWA members.

Next, the state suffered the most devastating earthquake in India in modern times. On 26 January 2001, the earthquake, measuring 7.9 on the Richter Scale, levelled many parts of Kutch, Surendranagar and Patan districts. Parts of Ahmedabad were also battered. Childcare centres were totally destroyed in some cases, severely damaged in others, or simply forced by the threat of more destruction to close. On 27 January, SEWA teams left for Kutch and adjoining areas, fanning out to each individual household in the villages where SEWA members lived. Dealing with human pain and suffering on such a scale was a tremendous strain on many of the workers.

In February 2002, Gujarat experienced some of the worst communal violence in its history. Most of the SEWA childcare centres were located in the Ahmedabad neighbourhoods that became battlegrounds. In Kheda district, too, many of the most badly affected villages also had SEWA crèches. There was a resurgence of the violence in late 2003.

In each of the disasters, the first task was to make contact with families and see to their immediate needs for food, clothing, medicine and temporary shelter or makeshift tents. The childcare teams worked shoulder-to-shoulder with other SEWA members. Mothers were anxious about their children. The team responded to this feeling, setting up and resuming childcare activities immediately. The childcare centres became focal points for relief and rehabilitation. All the people, including the children, received food, shelter and medical care. The teams helped organise clean-ups in their neighbourhoods to prevent epidemics. They also assisted SEWA's insurance group in assessing the damage in and around the centres.

In the district of Kheda, after the communal violence, teachers and aagewans set up crèches in the relief camps at considerable risk to themselves. At first, when SEWA organisers went to inquire about the safety of SEWA members in these camps, they were met with hostility, especially by the men. But it was the children who recognised them, ran to them and said, 'See, our SEWA *bahens* have come!'

Being an effective childcare worker or community organiser also means being a reliable friend who will lend a helping hand in good times and bad.

The Joy of Learning

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The crèche in Surendranagar

SEWA organisers believed that health care and good nutrition are necessary, but not sufficient. Children must also be exposed to fresh ideas and new activities. They should value their environment and traditions and explore the world around them and beyond their village or urban neighbourhood, and they should also experience the joy of learning.

SEWA childcare workers have mostly grown up in deprivation and poverty, without much exposure to joyful learning. A challenge facing SEWA has therefore been to encourage and support them in making a beginning towards a new approach. They have to teach children in a manner that is different with respect to the way they themselves were taught. What is needed, it seems, is an enrichment that is designed to help the children become enthusiastic about learning, yet is geared to the reality of working families.

To gain an understanding of such an approach, the SEWA team – aagewans, teachers and organisers – visited Bodh, an organisation in Jaipur that provides quality education to the children of working parents. There, SEWA members observed how the staff uses creative activities to stimulate language and cognitive skills. The activities are structured according to age and interest, and the atmosphere of attention to individual needs impressed the team.

A separate workshop on various activities that SEWA could undertake among children from birth to 6 years of age was held by Sandhan, which carries out research in education and development in Jaipur. The workshop examined appropriate nutrition among young children, the preparation of food supplements, the involvement of older children in caring for younger children, ways to learn about numbers and colours through games, songs, creative play and drama, the use of low-cost materials to make toys and teaching aids and the proactive role of the community in childcare and development. A second Sandhan workshop in January 2000 followed up on some of the ideas of the earlier workshop.

The SEWA team likewise visited Mobile Crèches in Delhi, one of the oldest, most successful childcare initiatives in India, to examine the activities developed there.

Several workshops were held by Sarjan in Ahmedabad and the districts of Kheda, Patan and Surendranagar in 2000 and 2001. As in the Jaipur workshop, the emphasis was on the use, as teaching aids, of easily accessible, inexpensive materials such as paper, string and seeds.

At a workshop on pre-school education held by Todden in Ahmedabad, the SEWA team learned to draft clear workplans and to employ themes – the seasons, for example – around which cognitive activities could be carried out.

In cooperation with the Bernard van Leer Foundation, SEWA also undertook numerous other workshops.

Among the innovative methods that have been learned by the SEWA team through these contacts and workshops and then applied in childcare centres are the following.

- The division of children into *small groups* according to age or interest encourages them to participate more actively.
- Simple *games* allow children to learn by playing even when space is at a premium as it is in the centres, especially in Ahmedabad. Games are useful in teaching children numbers and the names of birds, animals, flowers, vegetables and everyday objects.
- Teachers make original, practical *toys and puzzles* out of materials costing no more than 10 rupees for each item. Successful designs are reproduced by mothers who exhibit them in district offices and in villages or urban neighbourhoods.
- Inspired by the skills of their mothers, children have also begun creating toys. Children should be encouraged to *draw pictures and make scrapbooks, puppets and clay figures.* These should be exhibited for parents, friends and neighbours.
- Traditional *songs and lullabies* are being collected from older people in villages by aagewans and teachers. The collection will be published in a book illustrated by the children. The book will be given to centres and will also be made available to mothers.
- New and traditional *tales* have been compiled.
- *Drama* is used to help children express their thoughts and build their language skills and their confidence. Workshops have been held among teachers and mothers in two areas to explore ways to employ dance and drama to draw out children.
- *Field trips* have been organised for the children, most of whom have never before been outside their villages or neighbourhoods. They are taken to temples, mosques, historical sites, gardens and the zoo. Many of them have seen elephants and tigers for the first time.
- *National and religious holidays and festivals* should be celebrated together, and the stories and traditions associated with each of them should be shared with the children.

Documenting the Work, Remembering the People

> *'Our services have grown over the last three decades, and our teams have expanded, extending more childcare services to rural women. With this growth, consolidation is essential, and also regular checks for quality. . . . It is also a good practice to review one's activities every few years. It helps us to keep on track . . . .'*
>
> – Ela R. Bhatt (quoted in Anandalakshmy et al., 2003)

Constant monitoring and evaluation are required to ensure that the SEWA childcare centres are moving in an appropriate direction. This means that documentation and qualitative research are both part of capacity-building. The following are some of the relevant approaches that have been adopted.

Daily journals. Crèche teachers and supervisors have been urged to maintain daily journals to record events, observations and the special needs of individual children.

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Accurate writing is emphasized

Dakshaben's journal, village of Ajitgadh, Surendranagar

Date: 12-4-2001 (Thursday): Today, after the prayers at the centre, we were sitting with the children, when two women known as *charans* [in Gujarati] came to the centre. They are believed, in the villages, to have some spiritual powers. The children got scared upon seeing them, and some started crying, especially when they [the charans] said they would turn them into ashes. After a lot of pleading and persuasion, we convinced the women to go away. We told the children not to be afraid of them, as they were just like us.

Date : 16-4-2001 (Monday): Today, after prayers, we gave the older children copies of *Akashganga* [the SEWA magazine for adolescent girls]. They cannot read, but were very excited to see the pictures in the books. I think this exposure to books is very important.

The child register. One of the tools used to understand the children better is a register containing profiles of each of the children in the centre. For this purpose, the children have their photographs taken in their best clothes. They are usually thrilled to see the photos of themselves and their friends displayed on the walls of the centre and later in the register. They say they want always to look as neat and well dressed as they are in the photographs.

Parents are also pleased to know that a registry is kept on the children's background information, including a photograph. Indeed, this simple act of creating a register that includes pictures of the children triggered a spurt of interest in the centres. Attendance went up, and mothers started to drop in at the centre more often. The children came to school well groomed and would occasionally open the register to look at their pictures, saying, 'That's me!'. The book with the photographs clearly boosted every child's self-esteem.

A record of the 'alumni' of SEWA childcare. Books have also been opened on the children who have attended the centres and are now in school. They contain information on the current location of the children, how they feel about school and what their interests are.

Profiles of crèche workers. The crèche workers are mostly from the same community and the same social and economic background as the parents. Not only do the mothers feel comfortable leaving their children with women they know, but the workers can more easily empathise with the concerns and problems of the mothers and the children without self-consciousness. 'Social distance' between parent and worker, such an issue in programmes elsewhere, is non-existent. Moreover, the workers, who are respectfully referred to as 'teachers' by the community, are selected for their aptitude for communicating with very young children. The pre-service training is short, but the in-service training, which is continuous, has been considerably strengthened.

Pushpaben

In the years before I joined SEWA, I used to do domestic work in other people's houses in the village . . . , in return, taking home a very small amount of money that was not enough for a family of five. . . .

One day, I met a woman who was a relative of the teacher at one of the children's centres in Kheda. She told me that more teachers were required and that I should go for an interview. This was in the month of February in 1993. I was selected as a teacher. . . .

Initially, when I joined as a teacher, my neighbours and relatives used to make fun of me, saying that I had taken up the job of cleaning children's potties.

I used to reply, saying, 'Everybody cleans up after their own children, but when you do it for someone else, it is indeed a service.'

Well, that was in the beginning. Today . . . , they really praise me. . . .

I have taken loans from SEWA Bank to enable me to educate my children. . . .

SEWA has given me a new life . . . . We would not have been able to educate them to this extent, but for the loans from SEWA. I remember there were days when I had to keep them hungry and could feed them only once a day. On some days, they would see someone selling fruits on the street and ask me to buy some. I would not be able to buy anything then, and I would take them inside the house and explain the situation to them. . . .

My work at SEWA is constantly on my mind and in my heart. I think of my work and my children at the centre all the time. Even in my sleep, I dream about them. The mothers of the children always come to meet me. They trust me with their children.

We are their mothers when they are with us. They are our children, and we have to take care of them with love and affection.

From 'Pushpaben', a profile of a teacher at the childcare centre, Sinhol, Kheda district

A children's carnival as a tracer method. The festivals and cultural events in Gujarat are quite similar in villages and urban neighbourhoods. A *mela* ('fair') is loved by all. Families attend in large numbers, showing off their best clothes and buying trinkets and snacks. The thronging crowds and the loud noise are no deterrents; they are part of the attraction and are anticipated and enjoyed.

Knowing the place a mela has in local life, SEWA decided to invite the alumni of childcare centres to come to a *bal mela* ('children's carnival'). But there was going to be a twist. This was

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Hemlataben picks up children to take them to the centre in Chamampura

to be the occasion for an impromptu tracer study through which SEWA would locate alumni and find out more about them.

The plan proved to be easily implemented. The children lived in the same areas as the teachers. So, the search began with the help of the children whom the teachers met frequently on the streets. Each child who was invited to the mela would also be asked for the names of centre mates. Two or three names would be recalled, and these children, in turn, would give an additional five or six names. Gradually, the invitation lists got longer. Entire communities heard about the mela. There was so much excitement.

The teachers had been writing down the names and the addresses systematically. They visited the children in their homes and, on their visits, found out if the children were still attending school. They asked the children about their interests and plans for the future and made brief notes. Not surprisingly, these notes on children went into the hundreds. Similar records were started for all the crèches.

Of the 2,906 children traced, 2,798 were attending school. This means that fewer than 5% of all the children who had gone to SEWA centres were now out of school. If one considers the socio-economic category in which the families fall, this is a remarkable result.

Because of space limitations in Anand, which is in Kheda district, two carnivals were held, the second in February 2002. The information collected on the children proved very useful for documenting SEWA's successes and failures. In Ahmedabad, a similar exercise was undertaken. Several urban areas were combed for alumni of SEWA crèches, and the mela was held in July 2001.

Some of the children wore their brightest clothes to the mela; others came dressed as well-known historical or fictional characters. Areas were set up for various activities and games: crayon drawing, vegetable printing, hat making, puppet shows, music and dances. Several groups of children staged skits or mime shows. Some had studied so that they could introduce themselves in English. More than anything else, the children were happy to meet their friends and savour the excitement.

The mela also served to strengthen ties with the public officials who had been invited to participate in the inaugural functions. Their help in getting more physical space for the crèches was sought, as space is a perennial problem. In any case, their speeches indicated the value they attach to childcare, and their presence was viewed as an endorsement of the childcare programme.

During the mela, a small team of researchers went around talking to the children and their mothers to find out what the children remembered about their early crèche experiences and the extent to which one could attribute their attainments to these experiences.

Selections from MELA interviews

Manjulaben, mother of Ramila, aged 7: 'My daughter started going to the crèche when she was 6 months old. The centre has been very good for her. She learned a lot . . . . Had she not gone to the centre, she may not have gone to primary school. . . .'

Manjula, mother of Meena, aged 10: 'Meena started coming to the crèche when she was 1 year old. From that day, I was relieved of all tensions. If I was late in going there to bring her home, the teachers would take care of her until I came. She is 10 years old and in the fifth standard. She has become very clever.'

Jasodaben, mother of Dinesh, aged 9: 'Dinesh was 5 months old when I brought him to the centre. . . . He loved going to the centre and insisted on going, even on Sundays.

They gave nutritious food, and there was improvement in his health. We were also given training in childcare and health, so we were able to take care of the child's minor illnesses.'

Manguben, mother of Mona, aged 12: 'Mona was 3 years old when I put her into the centre. Today, she is in the seventh standard. She loves to study and goes to school without hesitation. My older daughter had not been to such a centre, so when I put her in school, she was not keen to study and dropped out. But Mona is very smart. She stands up boldly in her class and answers questions. Her teachers . . . praise her.'

Geetaben, mother of Montu, aged 8: 'I sell *agarbatti* [incense sticks] and other small items. At first, I did not believe that anyone would take care of my child when I was away. When I sent my son to the crèche, he could not speak. He would just take off his clothes and wander about. The teachers were very patient and trained him to have proper habits and not to take off his clothes. After joining the crèche, he learned to brush his teeth and say his prayers. He reads books and respects others. These are behaviours that are appreciated in our society. Therefore, I am satisfied.'

Children with Special Needs

In Ahmedabad, a survey was also undertaken by the SEWA childcare team in order to identify the number of children with physical or mental disabilities or handicaps. Seven children were found to have a problem (such as hearing impairment, mental retardation and cleft palate). When a similar kind of survey was undertaken in the SEWA centres at Kheda, the staff identified 35 children with some disability. SEWA has access to an expert in special education, and the handling of these children at the centres has been receiving the highest priority.

Before the start of the EI project, when an informal study was conducted, such a large number of children with disabilities had not been noted. The workers have now been trained to screen children informally and to seek professional advice.

In the beginning, the staff tended to consider undernourished and malnourished children 12 to 24 months of age as 'handicapped' since the children were often unable to stand or walk due to poor nutrition and the attendant morbidity. When asked how they took care of these children, the teachers reported that they cured them of their handicaps through massage and better nutrition. The truth was more complicated. On further probing, they frequently said that these children had been neglected by the parents. When the toddlers came to the SEWA crèches, they received medicines for de-worming, as well as food or snacks four times a day and an oil massage every day for the first six months. This treatment proved almost magical. All the children, except those with a serious disability, could, within a few months, participate in the normal routines of the SEWA centres.

Years ago, the SEWA crèches initiated the practice of letting all children share the classroom and the teacher's time and allowing them to play and interact in the same setting, irrespective of ability or disability.

A. loves to sing

A.'s father and mother consulted the doctor about her problem. She had a harelip and cleft palate. She was also very weak and anaemic. The doctor advised that lip surgery had to be carried out. Being very poor, A.'s parents, both of whom are agricultural labourers, could not afford an operation. Then, one of their relatives helped them out,

and A. had the operation in December 1997. The operation cost 2,500 rupees and lasted one hour. After some months, A. came to the Sayedwadi Vatva childcare centre with her mother, who told us that her daughter could not speak.

Initially, when A. started coming to the centre, she would sit and stare at the other children who would be talking, singing, or shouting. The three teachers started paying special attention to her from the first day. They tried to get her to speak. Slowly, she started picking up the words. Then one day, she suddenly began to sing with the other children. Today, A. talks all the time and sings whenever she can. She is very attached to her teachers and the children at the centre. Even on holidays, she comes to the centre.

A.'s parents, too, are happy because of her progress. They say the teachers have done what the doctors could not do. They say they will never forget what the teachers have accomplished for their little girl.

Another Sort of Effectiveness

'Our members said, "Whatever was to happen to us has happened. But we want a better future for our children. Here, while we are working in the salt pans, there is no one to take care of our children, no schools. What will they learn? How will they be healthy?".'

– Reema Nanavaty, coordinator, SEWA Rural Development

Since 1986, SEWA has been actively urging local and national government representatives to expand the number of childcare centres and boost their financial support for organised childcare. It has worked very closely with the Gujarat state branch of the Central Social Welfare Board and with Integrated Child Development Services of the national Government, for example. The appointment of Ela Bhatt, the founder of SEWA, as chairperson of the National Commission for Self-Employed and Informal Workers in 1987 represented a major opportunity for advocacy. Visiting all the states, she and the other commissioners met with thousands of working women. Childcare emerged as a common and urgent need.

The partnership with government in childcare has given SEWA the space to push for policy changes in early childhood care and education at a national level, and it has also meant that government policy-makers have been amenable to SEWA's suggestions for strengthening childcare in Gujarat and elsewhere in the country.

One relevant ground-level lesson emerging from SEWA's interactions with teachers, mothers and children is that the provision of childcare is not only a critical service for children, but is also an essential economic intervention to reduce poverty. Again and again, mothers working in the informal economy in India have stressed that it would be impossible for them to emerge from poverty without childcare. Indeed, poverty relief programmes are incomplete and may even be fruitless without a strong childcare component.

Likewise, however, if employment is scarce or if there is no job security, then childcare services will not be able satisfactorily to offset the ravages of household impoverishment on the health and well-being of children. Poor working women insist that, when they have regular work and steady incomes, they can adequately feed their families. Mothers are typically very conscientious about making sure their children eat properly. When they fail to do so, the cause is almost always poverty, not ignorance.

Clearly, a childcare service that is unresponsive to children's needs and the requirements of parents cannot be effective. This is true not only in terms of poverty and nutrition; it is

overarching. If a centre closes at 5 p.m., but the mothers must be in the fields until 6, the childcare service would have to extend the duration of care to be adequate. If salt workers spend eight months of the year in the desert manufacturing salt, centres, too, must be located there in the desert next to the salt pans.

A profound commitment by government and policy-makers, as well as substantial financial and material support, would be required to tie together childcare initiatives that are sensitive to the needs of working mothers and poverty reduction programmes that involve energised job creation and job security components for the same women. Perhaps the greatest challenge is the challenge of concepts.

By sharing these sorts of lessons about childcare with relevant state and national-level policy-makers, SEWA is attempting to make headway down another important road towards effectiveness.

4. Immigrant and Host, Irony and Contradiction

The Beta Israel immigrants in Israel were a Jewish minority in Ethiopia and are now an 'Ethiopian' minority in their new homes. Among the innovative features of the programme described in the report summarised in the following pages is the 'dyad', a combination of a local Israeli professional educator or social worker and a Beta Israel paraprofessional conversant in the culture and values of the immigrant community. The report is notable for its openness about difficulties encountered in the provision of assistance to the immigrant community, difficulties that also affected the Effectiveness Initiative.[1]

The Jewish Community in Ethiopia

The historical record is mute on the origins of the *Beta Israel*, an ancient and isolated Jewish community in Ethiopia.[2] Greek sources more than 2,000 years ago mention the presence of Jews in Ethiopia. Some researchers believe the Beta Israel may represent remnants of the Jewish exodus from Egypt that is an important biblical event. One rather popular view embraces the theory that the Beta Israel are descended from the union of the Queen of Sheba (the modern Yemen) and King Solomon and are thus directly related to the Ethiopian emperors, the earliest dynasty to endure into recent times anywhere in the world.[3]

The Beta Israel lived in close proximity to predominantly Christian Ethiopians in villages in the north-western highland regions of the provinces of Gondar, Tigray and Wolkait. Though the villages differed from region to region in language, clothing and customs, they shared many characteristics and essentially the same ways of life. The Beta Israel had maintained their strong communal identity as Jews for hundreds if not thousands of years. The interrelationships that prevailed among them were 'primary', that is, personal, stable and lifelong. Everyone in a particular community knew everyone else. Social structures followed well-defined, tradition-based religious guidelines and usually occurred within the large, extended patriarchal families that made up the Beta Israel in the villages. All decisions were reached through consultations with elders or religious leaders, whose word was law. Rights in the community were grounded on social stature. Individuals who were older or more learned or who otherwise had more social influence had more authority. Communal assistance was supplied to people in want according to need.

The foundation of the Beta Israel economy was subsistence agriculture. Especially in places where Jews were denied landholding rights, many of the people were proficient in crafts such as blacksmithing and pottery-making. There was little division of labour or specialisation other than gender-based roles. The men were responsible for farming, community governance and relations with non-Jewish neighbours. Women were responsible

1 The core of this summary is based on Lipsky et al. (2002), who include a disclaimer that their report does 'not necessarily represent the views of Almaya as it is now constituted'.

2 *Beta Israel* means 'House of Israel'. *Beta* is a word in Ge'ez, the liturgical language used by Jewish religious leaders in Ethiopia. Ge'ez is probably an historical offshoot of Aramaic. In Ethiopia, the Beta Israel are more commonly known by a derogatory local term, *falasha*, which means 'stranger', 'alien', or 'landless one'. For reference material on the Jewish community in Ethiopia, click on 'Ethiopian Jews' at <*www.us-israel.org/jsource/Judaism/biblio.html*> or <*www.us-israel.org/jsource/Judaism/jewhist1a.html*>. See also the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, at <*www.hmml.org*>. For a more thorough history of the Beta Israel, go to <*www.us-israel.org/jsource/Judaism/ejhist.html*>. The interesting, informative website of the Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews, at <*www.iaej.co.il/*>, merits a visit.

3 Haile Selassie, who died in 1974, was the last of the line.

for childraising, cooking, cleaning and bringing water. Families arranged the marriages of their daughters and sons at an early age, and brides relocated to the villages of their husbands. Large families were considered desirable, even necessary, so as to sustain the agricultural workforce. Lineage was observed scrupulously.

Few adults could read or write in any language. (When they did have such knowledge, it was mostly only in Amharic.)[4] Beta Israel living in large cities were often educated in Western-style schools, but they made up less than 1% of the population. Most Beta Israel speak Amharic or Tigrinya. In Israel, they have now begun gradually to adopt Hebrew.

ALMAYA, ALTER FOGEL

Beta Israel mother and child

The Ethiopian Community in Israel

Small numbers of Ethiopian Jews had reached Israel on their own by 1977. Between that year and mid-1984, about 8,000 arrived, often through clandestine arrangements. Thousands more set out on foot to cross the hundreds of miles of desert bridging war-torn Ethiopia and Sudan. Two in every five perished in the burning sands or at the hands of bandits. In Sudan, they waited as refugees for months, sometimes years, suffering from hunger and epidemics and hiding their religion.

Finally, between November 1984 and January 1985, the Israeli Government was able to carry out Operation Moses, a large-scale transfer of around 8,000 Beta Israel refugees from Sudan to Israel. Details of the secret operation soon reached the press, however, and this led to the closing of the Sudanese route. The Beta Israel in Sudan became trapped; many were jailed, and many trekked back to Ethiopia. Departure from Sudan and from Ethiopia to Israel was cut off. In the hope of reaching Israel and family members, remaining residents of the Jewish villages began to flow out of the highlands towards the slums of Addis Ababa. It was only in late May 1991, as the Ethiopian Government toppled and after a hiatus of more than six years, that nearly 15,000 destitute Ethiopian Jews left Addis Ababa for Israel through the airlifts of Operation Solomon, an astonishing overnight action.

Today, the number of Jews of Ethiopian origin in Israel is estimated at approximately 85,000, including children born in the new homeland. The immigrants are still arriving from Ethiopia. Perhaps only a few thousand remain there, though some put the total at over 10,000.

The immigration of the Ethiopian Jews to Israel is a unique case. Africans possessed of traditional culture moved not as individuals, but as an entire community into a modern society. Moreover, though the desire among both the immigrants and the hosts that the newcomers be accepted as equal members in their adopted homes is intense, the difficulties

4 According to World Bank (2002), 53% of the men and 69% of the women aged 15+ were illiterate in Ethiopia in 2000. This is an improvement over the figures for 1990, which were 64% and 80%, respectively.

have been enormous. At first, many of the Ethiopian immigrants were in shock because of the hardship and suffering of their journeys and the deaths of family members and companions along the way. Then, as they left the protective reception centres or their temporary dwellings for permanent housing, they were confronted by a society which was unfamiliar not only because it was urban-industrial, but because it was at odds with the communal dream of the immigrants.

COURTESY OF ALMAYA

Mothers learn about childcare and signing documents

Most had not realised that Israeli Jews might have a skin colour different from their own; many had never seen white people before arriving in Israel. Likewise, Israel did not seem the biblical 'Holy Land' of milk and honey they had expected. People were not wearing long white robes; many were not religiously observant. Jerusalem was Westernised, and Israeli society was characterised by a complex division of labour, a high literacy rate, mass social processes, the importance of 'secondary' task-specific relationships and the predominance of status based on achievement rather than age or religious eminence.

The Ethiopian community is now spread out among many towns in Israel. The bulk of the population is concentrated in two areas, one in the north, and the other in the south of the country, a situation that tends to reinforce the separate identity of the Beta Israel. Thus, for example, in a few schools in these two areas, 80% of the pupils are of Ethiopian origin, though this is true of only 2% of all pupils in Israel.

The arrival of the immigrants has required substantial interventions to help the community function within the host society and avoid becoming marginalised. In many cases, the disillusionment of the newcomers has compounded the problems of acclimatisation, which have been far greater among the Ethiopians than they have been among most immigrants to Israel. The adaptive skill of the immigrants must therefore be applauded and regarded as a success in many ways.

By the same token, knowledge in Israel about the Ethiopian Jews, their habits, language and ways of life was almost non-existent. The record of the reception of Ethiopian immigrants in Israel is uneven. Intentions have usually been of the best; the budgets allocated for *klita* ('absorption') have been generous, and efforts have been made not to repeat the mistakes of the absorption efforts among immigrants in the 1950s.[5] Nonetheless, the integration of this community has been slower and more painful than anticipated.

Their traditional lifestyle, rural background and lack of formal education have made it almost impossible for the immigrants to find work other than unskilled or semi-skilled jobs at minimum wage. Most men over 40 and most married women – 50% of the adults – are not employed. Ethiopian families generally depend on a sole wage earner, child benefits through national insurance, or supplementary income payments. Among the families, 90% live at or below the poverty line, meaning the Ethiopians are the poorest population group in Israel.

5 'Klita' is the Hebrew word commonly used to refer to immigrant resettlement services. It means 'absorption' or 'grafting' in the sense of a benevolent, smooth transplantation into a new body, as in a tree.

The educational achievement of Beta Israel children is often low. The immigrant parents have little understanding of the curricula and the demands of the Israeli education system. They lack the skills, local language fluency and confidence to communicate with their children's teachers, whom they regard as the sole custodians of their children's education, as in Ethiopia. Typically, they have great difficulty supervising or assisting their children with schoolwork. Teachers often do not appreciate the problems and needs that arise because of the cultural backgrounds of the children and their families.

The Establishment and the Programmes of Almaya

In 1985, with the support of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, the Community and Education Project for Beta Israel was established in Beer Sheva, in the south of Israel, to assist the Ethiopian Jews who had immigrated to the country through Operation Moses.

By 1990, the immigrant community had become closely involved in the Beer Sheva initiative, and the structure and management of the project were altered. At that time, the project was renamed the Association for the Advancement of the Ethiopian Family and Child in Israel (Almaya) and was registered as an independent, not-for-profit organisation overseen by an elected board of directors that included immigrant members.

Israeli immigration personnel and veteran Israeli Ethiopians attempting to meet the critical needs of the Beta Israel made pressing requests for Almaya's expertise in 1991, following Operation Solomon's overnight influx of thousands of immigrants. Expanded Almaya programmes were implemented among the newcomers in many Israeli communities. The programmes used the skills and resources available among the immigrants to prepare the children, the families and the community for life in Israel. Many of the programmes were designed to address problems identified by the immigrant population. 'Culture' was never neglected. The project trained workers from the community, created educational materials based on the community's rich Ethiopian heritage and educated others about the community's origins and experiences in Ethiopia and Israel.

Innovative community-based programmes were run by Ethiopian *madrichot* (para-professionals), who served as agents of change and helped create links between the immigrants and the broader society.[6] Each Ethiopian madricha was joined in a 'dyad' with a local Israeli professional educator or social worker. While the Israeli professional guided the technical aspects of the Ethiopian madricha's work in the community, the madricha coached her non-Ethiopian counterpart in the language, culture and values of the community.

The Almaya dyad and the Almaya training programmes for Ethiopian madrichot and Israeli professionals emerged as a national model for replication in the late 1990s. The training incorporated exercises in cultural sensitivity and regular in-service instruction. The model was flexible and adaptable to specific community needs, priorities and resources. Trained Almaya graduates have often gone on to complete basic education requirements, continue their formal education to achieve certification as childcare providers, participate in national Ethiopian women's leadership courses and obtain university degrees. Some have become programme supervisors. Others occupy positions in governmental and non-governmental agencies dealing with Ethiopian immigrants.

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6 *Madricha, madrich, madrichot* and *madrichim* are, respectively, the feminine and masculine singular and the feminine and masculine plural of the Hebrew word meaning 'guide' or 'counsellor'. They are commonly used to refer to paraprofessionals, including educators, who make home visits to people in need of their services.

Early childhood programmes

Almaya undertook its first programme, the Enrichment Programme for Pre-School Children and Parents, in 1985 when it began offering after-school care for Ethiopian immigrant children aged 3 to 8. The programme was initiated in the neighbourhood immediately surrounding the Almaya office in Beer Sheva. It was later extended to a second and then a third neighbourhood. Sites were selected according to need, proximity to the target population and available funding. The children participated willingly, as they relished the play and stimulation the programme provided.

By the 1990s, the after-school care programme was offering guidance to parents and serving as a follow-up, primarily for 'graduates' of the Home Visiting Programme and the Parents Cooperative Pre-School Programme (both described hereafter). Children attend the programme twice weekly from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. and work in small groups of six to eight children per madricha on a range of focused and task-oriented activities that reinforce the pre-school curriculum, including, for example, language enrichment, pre-literacy education and the learning of concepts such as 'large and small', 'over and under', and 'many and few'. Parents meet once a week with madrichot to master the same concepts, perform the same activities and discuss various issues and the problems they encounter as parents.

The programme has been adjusted to dynamic changes in population and needs. Thus, in 2000, some 40 children and their parents who had arrived from the distant Quara region of Ethiopia took part in a specially designed version of the programme at the immigrant reception centre in Beer Sheva, where they were living. The programme ran until the families moved to permanent housing in Beer Sheva and other towns.

ALMAYA, ALTER FOGEL

Programmes focused on adults and children

Launched in 1987, the Home Visiting Programme seeks to enhance the development of children from birth to age 3 and facilitate the cultural and social acclimatisation of their mothers and other family members. Ethiopian madrichot visit young children who do not participate in other educational programmes. The madrichot guide the mothers in the children's development through play and verbal interaction and demonstrate ways to integrate their common Ethiopian cultural heritage into the child's education. Part of the weekly, one-hour home visit is devoted to the mother and her health, home management, nutrition, family relations, toy swaps and so on. Monthly meetings of mothers and children provide additional cultural enrichment and peer support. Ethiopian families living in isolated neighbourhoods have benefited from the programme. In 2001, 85 families in Beer Sheva and 450 in 22 other locations (including two new immigrant reception centres) were participating.

Begun in three towns in 1988, the Almaya Parents Cooperative Pre-School Programme is designed for children 18 months to 3 years old and their parents. The pre-schools are open five or six days a week from 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The programme is available in communities where there is a large concentration of immigrant families with pre-schoolers. Warm meals prepared on the premises are served midday. The pre-schools offer a nurturing environment and educational enrichment for the children without taking responsibility away from the parents. Children and their parents are exposed to a classroom environment that supplies invaluable experiences and helps pave the way towards the formal education system.

Around 20 children attend each pre-school, which is staffed by two Ethiopian madrichot who have been certified as childminders. The madrichot are assisted by a parent on a daily rotation. The parents acquire hands-on experience in education through play, and they assist in food preparation, thereby learning how to prepare simple, inexpensive and nutritious meals for their children.

The programme was replicated in the late 1990s, and there were five cooperative pre-schools in the country in 2001, including one in Beer Sheva. The programme also operates a toy-lending library for the children and their families to help reinforce stimulation and enrichment in the home. (A tracer study of graduates of the pre-schools is described below.)

In cooperation with the Well Baby Clinics of the Ministry of Health, the Parent and Infant Play and Stimulation Corners Programme has been run periodically, particularly among the newer immigrants in Beer Sheva and environs. The programme provides small facilities in clinics so that parents can play with their children and ask the madrichot questions about childhood development while they are waiting to see the medical practitioners. The madrichot also translate for the parents and the staff and calm expectant mothers and mothers who are anxious because their children are about to undergo health check-ups or immunisations. They likewise help non-Ethiopian families on medical visits.

Programmes for primary school children and their parents

The Beer Sheva Ethiopian community was becoming very concerned because some of its children were roaming the streets or had become involved in petty theft and vandalism. This was the impetus for a programme called 'Big Brother', which aimed to build role models for Ethiopian youngsters.

The B'Maaleh 'On the Ascent' Programme for Primary School Children, a later version, was begun in the mid-1990s to meet the needs of children between the ages of 6 and 12 considered at risk because they are attending school sporadically or not at all, failing in their school work, or suffering from behavioural disorders. Young Ethiopian university students with training in social work or education are put in contact with the children individually or in small groups and in close cooperation with parents and teachers. They provide support, guidance, positive reinforcement and peer-group enrichment activities. University and high-school student volunteers offer assistance with homework. The programme operates year-round, including during school vacations. In Beer Sheva in 2001, 100 children were involved in the programme, while 75 were participating in three other cities.

The Youth B'Maaleh Programme, which ran for a couple of years until 2001, was aimed at 13-to-16-year-olds who had 'graduated' from the B'Maaleh programme and needed additional support and guidance. Other youth on the borderline of failure in school or delinquency were also included. The programme was based on the same principles as B'Maaleh, but with greater emphasis on peer-group activities. The programme sought to integrate Ethiopian

young people into mainstream Israeli youth activities such as the Scout movement, *Gadna* (army preparatory training) and activities organised by the Nature Protection Society. In Beer Sheva, some 30 youngsters participated.


ALMAYA, ALTER FOGEL

Mothers listening to a madricha

The Integrated After-School Enrichment Activities Programme was initiated in the late 1990s. Once or twice a week, 70 Ethiopian children in primary school attend municipal after-school enrichment activities of their choice: computers, football, karate, ballet, gymnastics and so on. Almaya (with the support of various donors) supplies subsidies for fees and equipment, while parents pay a nominal registration charge. The project coordinator maintains close contact with each of the children and each set of parents, who are invited to participate in monthly workshops and discussion groups. The activity groups, which are common among middle-class Israeli children, were a new and enthralling experience for these youngsters, as well as for their parents, who, however, initially considered the programme a waste of time. Now, parents frequently come on their own to sign their children up for the activities.

In the Almaya Choral Groups, which were discontinued in 2001, 40 Ethiopian girls aged 5 to 13 participated in three choral groups twice weekly under the tutelage of a professional music teacher, who was an immigrant from Russia. Musical education, including sight reading and notation, was the main focus.

The National Ethiopian Women's Leadership Programme

The training and use of Ethiopian madrichot in Beer Sheva have served as a practical model to empower other women in the immigrant Ethiopian community and give them the means to succeed within Israeli society. National leadership courses are now being sponsored by Almaya, the Joint Distribution Committee, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Israel Women's Network to provide tools and frames of reference to enable Ethiopian immigrant women to cultivate initiative and leadership capabilities. The women have designed and executed projects with the tools and skills they have gained through the courses, and the training has become an important steppingstone for women with little or no formal schooling.

The National Training, Educational Resource and Dissemination Centre

From 1997 to 2002, the professional staff of the Almaya National Training, Resource and Dissemination Centre supplied supervision and guidance for local project coordinators, monthly regional in-service training sessions and workshops, and national study days for the staff of affiliate programmes throughout the country. At the height of its activities in 2001, the centre ran services for 23 Home Visiting Programme teams, five cooperative pre-schools, and the B'Maaleh programme in five locations. Additional centre operations included fee-for-service training courses on Ethiopian culture, work with Ethiopian pre-school children and their parents in Beer Sheva, lectures on relevant topics for teaching staff at schools linked

to the B'Maaleh programme and workshops organised on request for a varied clientele, including kindergarten inspectors and day-care providers.

Centre staff offered intensive and on-going training to Ethiopian immigrants, especially women. Short-term training modules were developed that included in-service vocational training. These initiatives also served as a means to interview and select new staff. Likewise, the early training modules set the foundation for the nationally accredited Home Visiting Programme training courses that have been offered since 2000 through the Central School for Social Welfare Workers of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. More than 45 social work coordinators and 85 madrichot were trained in this way.

A principal area of centre activity was the development and updating of educational aids and the integration of Ethiopian and Israeli cultural themes and motifs. Substantial progress was made in the production of innovative and attractive educational materials for educators, children and parents through the addition of new elements, such as the use of Amharic and Tigrinya, together with Hebrew. The early childhood curriculum was enriched with activities aimed at fostering language development and communication. The centre supplied training materials, programme guides and kits, games and a variety of didactic aids for programmes throughout the country.

Almaya advocacy and community service

A less public facet of Almaya's work in Beer Sheva has been the assistance made available to the individuals and families who turn to the organisation for help in negotiating the maze of the state bureaucracy. The following are some examples.

- In the late 1990s, two madrichot were assigned to the local social welfare department to act as cultural mediators and offer guidance to problem families with at-risk children.
- Ethiopian social workers counsel Beta Israel having difficulty with the state bureaucracy.
- The Almaya offices served as the southern bureau of the International Association for the Protection of the Child.
- A veteran Ethiopian madricha works part-time among Ethiopian mothers who are now or who have been in the Shelter for Battered Women in Beer Sheva.
- For several years, Almaya issued a monthly newsletter in Amharic, Hebrew and Tigrinya.

Almaya staffers, especially emerging young Ethiopian professionals, have also played a significant and active advocacy role in areas pertinent to the education and welfare of Ethiopian children and families. Both in Beer Sheva and at the national level, Almaya representatives are active in the various committees and special teams organised under the auspices of the National Coalition for the Educational Advancement of the Ethiopian Child, an initiative of the Israel Joint Distribution Committee.

Recurring programme obstacles

Although Almaya programmes have generally been successful, some difficulties have emerged repeatedly in evaluations no matter the intervention taking place or the population involved. The programmes operated by Almaya are sometimes redesigned to address these problems. The following have been the most common problem areas.

- *Recruitment and dropout.* There was tremendous difficulty recruiting community participants for activities, and the dropout rates among those immigrants who were recruited were very high.
- *Initiative.* The Ethiopian madrichot and the programme participants showed limited initiative in tasks such as picking up a key to open a meeting room. Professional staff realised that what was obvious to them was often not at all obvious to the immigrants.
- *Punctuality.* Participants often arrive late or do not stay until the end of activities.
- *Planning.* Many Ethiopian professionals and madrichot find long-term planning difficult.
- *Authority.* Within the Ethiopian community, Ethiopian counsellors encounter problems training other Ethiopians, while people in the community do not always accept their peers as authoritative counsellors. Some Ethiopian workers consider simple requests, such as the reporting of work hours to management, insulting and evidence of mistrust.
- *Pace of change.* There has been frustration on all sides (senior staff, madrichot and participants) with the slow pace of change relative to the significant investment.
- *Mother-child interactions.* Among the Ethiopian immigrants, it is not customary for mothers to talk to their babies and toddlers or to play at length with them. Thus, within the pre-school programmes, the mothers were encouraged to do this.

The EI in Israel

When the Bernard van Leer Foundation began exploring potential partnerships for its Effectiveness Initiative among early childhood development programmes, the term 'effectiveness' was understood broadly, that is, partner programmes were to have a reputation both locally and internationally for functioning well, but effectiveness was also unmistakably to be tied to impact and to positive outcomes as perceived by the stakeholders. It had to be clear the programmes were satisfying the expressed needs of their constituents.

After Almaya agreed to participate in the EI in 1999, it thus seemed obvious to the EI team in Israel that it should examine Almaya's relationships with its many stakeholders – children, parents, programme staff and the executive board – and with the wider community within which Almaya operates. It felt that the best way to do this was to interview the stakeholders and allow them to define in their own words the world with which Almaya deals. As interviewers, the team members therefore had to put themselves in the background, while being attentive, empathic listeners.

Nonetheless, since the main tool for data gathering was individual and focus-group interviews among a large variety of stakeholders who offered observations on many types of activities, there was also an analytical component that relied on the expertise of the team. The findings revealed through the interviews raised questions that had to be evaluated and tested by the team until such time as they were confirmed or refuted.

Meanwhile, an important consideration for Almaya was the impending conclusion, in 2001, of its long and significant relationship with the Bernard van Leer Foundation. The EI seemed to represent an opportunity to examine possible directions for the future, but also to synthesise the considerable documentation the organisation had amassed since its establishment by the Foundation in 1985.

Along with its own routine, on-going evaluation, Almaya thus decided to conduct a 'meta-evaluation' of the regular evaluations carried out since its inception. This meant not only that all the data gathered over the years by Almaya would get a fresh look, but also that these data and the resulting analyses would be available to the EI team as part of its exploration.

Altogether, there were six parallel studies: a meta-evaluation and an on-going evaluation conducted by Almaya, but made available to the EI, and a thematic analysis of effectiveness, a tracer study, a study of the perceptions of the madrichot and a study of the role of Ethiopian professionals carried out by the EI team.

The meta-evaluation and the on-going evaluation

The evaluators had changed over the years, but the routine evaluation reports remained. The meta-evaluation (or 'meta-content analysis') was a review of these reports. It was essentially a study of processes, problems and changes during Almaya's 16 years of operation.

COURTESY OF ALMAYA

There was much discussion and learning

Hand-in-hand with the meta-evaluation was the periodic evaluation of Almaya. In light of the EI exploration, the work concentrated on reaching a better understanding of the felt views, beliefs and aspirations of the Ethiopian community. The evaluation directed particular attention to children and their parents, the madrichot, the non-Ethiopian Almaya senior supervisory staff and the local non-Ethiopian professional project coordinators.

The main evaluative tool was often simply the presence of the evaluators in local and national steering committee meetings, planning sessions, home visiting activities, parents cooperative pre-school activities, meetings between the madrichot and their professional partners and so on. After sitting in on several events, the evaluators met with researchers to identify possible patterns or trends. Questions about these were then raised with Almaya to gauge the validity of the observations.

Main findings. Because of the expansion of the Home Visiting Programme in 1999-2001 to more than 20 towns, many of the madrichot and local professional coordinators had only recently been hired, and the programme was new in most localities. Despite these barriers, the programme was responding to needs in the Ethiopian immigrant community.

Greater attention needed to be dedicated to the programme coordinators. These individuals, usually social workers, are key in the programme in that they are the links among the madrichot, the families, welfare services, senior staff and programme management. The coordinators generally do not have enough time to fulfil their functions properly; the definition of their role lacked clarity, and they are given inadequate guidance.

Part of the problem was the high turnover among the madrichot. If a madricha leaves, the coordinators had to start over by hiring and training a replacement. The high turnover was due to the demands of the job and the low salaries. Despite the turnover, most madrichot and coordinators are very dedicated and quite able.

The main outcomes identified among immigrant families were the increasing involvement of parents in their children's education, the adoption of habits and customs evident in mainstream Israeli life, more assertiveness in dealing with institutions and organisations that provide aid and services to families, the establishment of more linkages with people, especially immigrants, who are not relatives, greater community involvement, and more awareness of the need to preserve the Ethiopian heritage.

The thematic analysis of effectiveness

The EI team sought to gain an understanding of the effectiveness of Almaya by sampling the opinions of the full range of stakeholders in order to get as many perspectives of Almaya as possible. Focus-group interviews were conducted with madrichot and Ethiopian mothers. The EI team and one consultant also carried out 43 individual and group interviews with Almaya executive board members, madrichot, senior staff, former staff, donors in and outside Israel, representatives of governmental and non-governmental organisations, and parents. The team felt the sampling of the Ethiopian community could have been more extensive.

Though the spotlight was on general notions of effectiveness, the interviews also covered programme operations, planning, the supervision and training of the dyads, relationships with parents, programme achievements among Almaya clientele, inter-organisational contacts, organisational learning and the role of the executive board. The interviews were relatively open ended.

To avoid any bias and to protect the anonymity of the interviewees, two independent evaluators performed the thematic analysis of the data. The results were submitted to the EI coordination team.

During a second phase, various audiences were asked if and how the themes fit their opinions of Almaya's 'effectiveness'. Two initial feedback sessions with the professional staff, the madrichot and the executive board were held.

Main findings. The centrality of two themes – Almaya's cross-cultural work and the efforts at empowerment among the community – emerged from the interviews. Some of the interviewees who spoke of the first, the cross-cultural work, highlighted the long-term relationships between the Ethiopian madrichot and the families.

> *'Almaya's slogan is "The community for the community". A person who is on the inside [an Ethiopian madricha] knows both cultures, the difficulties in each culture and the experience of transition and absorption. An outsider doesn't understand. The staff is of both cultures.'*

> *'[The Ethiopian madrichot] are accepted by the community. [There is] a feeling of belonging. . . . When a non-Ethiopian woman walked in, it just didn't work.'*

> *'[Almaya was] one of the first organisations to take people from the community to work with the community.'*

> *'Madrichim in the field are only from within the community. . . . They [act as a] bridge between those who are absorbing [the host society] and those who are being absorbed [the immigrants].'*

> *'All along the way, Almaya worked with madrichot from within the community. . . . In the beginning, most organisations didn't accept Almaya's principles; they said that the madrichot aren't Israeli enough . . . . Today, they [organisations] are changing their approach and . . . are adapting our way and using it in their programmes. Almaya is successful because it is good and because of its principles.'*

On the other hand, interviewees also noted significant socio-cultural gaps among Almaya staff that affected the organisation's programmes.

'In the beginning, we [non-Ethiopians involved in Almaya] were not acquainted with Ethiopian culture. . . . We learned gradually, by doing one thing at a time. We let the madrichot do the things they knew and at which they were good, and we observed. I learned to look and ask.'

'In Ethiopia, learning is through imitating. Here, mothers teach children by giving them lots of stimulation.'

'It is hard for them [the Ethiopian madrichot] to plan, and it is hard for us [the non-Ethiopian professional staff] to teach them to plan.'

'The veteran professional [local Israeli] staff at Almaya is out of sync with the board and the community. Programme planning is too narrow. The professional staff sees early childhood as having the utmost importance, but older [Ethiopian] people don't see things that way. They see needs that are more urgent. . . . the elderly, men, the young, unemployment: all these are urgent needs.'

'Those vast differences in understanding are very damaging to the communication between those in Almaya who come from Ethiopia and those who don't. When communication is poor, all functioning is poor, be it decision-making or any other aspect. Communication is the key.'

Almaya's role in empowerment, the second major theme, was spoken of in a positive way by some interviewees.

'Almaya was an important port of entry for young women; it was the first organisation they worked in. . . . It devoted itself to helping them advance. . . . It was one of the first organisations to take people from within the community to work in the community.'

'Almaya has turned into a springboard. It is quite a unique place that gives young people an opportunity to show their abilities and, from there, to compete for jobs outside the community.'

'. . . in many institutions and offices, 90% of those who work with the absorption of Ethiopian immigrants are Almaya graduates.'

Some stakeholders noted a tension between the value Almaya set on 'professionalism' in terms of formal degrees and the value it set on the enhancement of the capacities and responsibilities of the madrichot. The madrichot often feel hampered by their lack of education; there was a perception that a 'glass ceiling' existed within Almaya. Interviewees also cited Almaya's commitment to women's leadership development, while charging that other policies were evidence of deep-seated paternalism among Almaya's senior leadership.

COURTESY OF ALMAYA

Beta Israel children at play

'We need a director from the community; it's a problem that the management is faranjee [white Israeli]. It conveys a message that we aren't capable. There is a "glass ceiling".'

'There was lots of tension between two desires that conflict at times. On the one hand, the desire to empower the members of the community and to develop the abilities of its members to take their place in the staff and management. On the other hand, a desire to maintain professional standards. . . . There are also tensions and gaps.'

'It is a tricky issue, the question of an Ethiopian as part of the senior professional staff, because it is difficult not to sound racist. There are few Ethiopians who can really fill this position. The madrichot are doing an excellent job and are capable of being good programme managers [lower and middle management].'

Almaya sets great store on the preservation of the immigrant community's culture. This has been a main element in its work. At the same time, the association recognises the need for change within the community. This recognition is therefore accompanied by a constant critical examination of the effects of change on the community and its culture.

'Most organisations treat immigrants as people who must forget everything they know [because it isn't relevant to life in Israel] and learn everything all over again. Almaya treats immigrants as whole people. Roots have to be strengthened, . . . and, at the same time, they [immigrants] have to get used to a new place. For example, [they have to] get to the doctor on time for an appointment. But, in Ethiopia, time is determined by the sun, and respect for adults is more important than time. In Israel, there is no respect for adults; there is respect for children.'

The tracer study of graduates of the Parents Cooperative Pre-School Programme

The tracer study of graduates of Almaya's Parents Cooperative Pre-School Programme was initiated by the Bernard van Leer Foundation and conducted in 2000-2001.[7] It was designed to identify any lasting effects of the programme on participants and their parents ten years on.

Four teams carried out individual interviews with Ethiopian young people from two Beer Sheva neighbourhoods who had been in the cooperative pre-schools between 1988 and 1990, a control group of Ethiopian children of the same age and from the same two neighbourhoods who had not participated in the programme, the parents and teachers of the children in both groups and a group of non-Ethiopian children from the town of Arad who were the same age as the other children.

The interviews among the cooperative pre-school graduates involved 37 Ethiopian children. All the children were asked questions about their daily lives, their families and, through the use of pictures, their inner world and their relationship with their surroundings. The questions were open ended so as to allow the children to reveal their perceptions in their own way. Nonetheless, experience had shown that many interviewees of Ethiopian origin, irrespective of age, were taciturn and tended to be very reticent even in relaxed conversations with strangers. Thus, if the children's responses were considered brief, the interviewers posed

7 See Levin-Rozalis and Shafran (2003). See also the section on the 'Following Footsteps' tracer studies in the bibliography.

follow-up questions so as to encourage the children freely to impart more information.

Only half of the parents in the sample could be interviewed, and this small number meant that it was not possible to develop with any certainty a description of the differences between the parents of the test group and the parents of the control group of children. Most of the information was obtained from the mothers only. As with the children, follow-up questions were also employed.

The teacher interviews involved 46 teachers of 67 children in the sixth to the eleventh grades in 17 primary and secondary schools, *yeshivas* (colleges for Jewish studies) and boarding schools. The questions sought to elicit information about the performance of the children in school, but also information on their behaviour outside school, including issues of social conflict and violence whether committed by the children, or involving the children as victims. There were also questions about immigrant Ethiopian children in general. The questions were open ended, and the teachers were free to respond by relating anything that came to their minds about the children.

Main findings. The analysis of the data gathered through the tracer study revealed that the cooperative pre-school graduates (the test group) are different in key respects from other Ethiopian children of the same age. The test group of children, much more than the control group, showed a clear tendency towards self-awareness, independent behaviour and decisiveness. They seemed to have a more well developed capacity to express their feelings and their needs and to apply their talents.

This finding was supported by the interviews with the parents and teachers. The teachers perceived these children as more dominant, more able to identify and communicate their needs and more active as leaders among their schoolmates. Moreover, the children appeared less likely to deny or be embarrassed by their Ethiopian heritage. Other main areas in which the test group was found to be different from the control group were the organisation of activities and ideas, initiative, the perception of the importance of school, home and family, and the tendency to embrace positive social interactions.

The study also found that the parents of these children were more involved in school activities and that they see themselves as responsible for their children's future much more than do the parents in the control group.

Study of the perceptions of the madrichot

An important element in the effectiveness of Almaya that emerged again and again in the interviews was the training and development of the cadre of Ethiopian madrichot and the organisation's reliance on them in its interventions. A special study of the madrichot was thus conducted. Though the main focus was children's achievements that could be linked more directly to the madrichot, the study also examined the changes these women had undergone.

ALMAYA, ALTER FOGEL

Building blocks

From a national sample of approximately 100 madrichot who had worked or were currently working in Almaya programmes, 27 were selected for the study interviews. As elsewhere, the interviews were semi-structured. Once

the questions that had been prepared in advance were asked, the interviews became open and more free ranging. Later, the interview results were analysed thematically.

Main findings. Two main issues emerged through the interviews: the change that had occurred in the structure and functions of the Ethiopian family in Israel and the changes in child-rearing practices. The analysis painted a picture of the great difficulties that the madrichot and the immigrants in general have faced in Israel. As regards the family, the key change has been a breakdown in the extended family. The support of the extended family that was a tradition in Ethiopia has been lost in Israel for various fundamental reasons, including the disruptions involved in the departure from Ethiopia. In their new homes in Israel, many Ethiopian mothers must carry on alone in their everyday struggles.

Linked to this change has been the change in child-rearing practices. In Ethiopia, relatives all helped ensure the well-being of children. In Israel, parents must work hard at jobs outside the home, while caring alone for their children. Childcare services are also much more expensive in Israel. Parents in Israel must plan ahead for their children's education and organise their children's participation in day-care, pre-school and school.

Other major issues revealed through the interviews included the difficulty of maintaining Ethiopian traditions given that the Ethiopian (now Israeli) children want 'to be like everyone else'. The madrichot frequently mentioned the benefits of the Home Visiting Programme and the training they had received through the Parents Cooperative Pre-School Programme in their efforts with children. They often pointed out that, as madrichot, their contributions to the community have become more meaningful. They are now actively transferring knowledge and skills to children and their families. The madrichot generally expressed disappointment that they had been unable to tie close bonds of friendship with non-Ethiopian women.

The role of Ethiopian professionals

The study has yet to be completed on the growing body of Ethiopian professional social workers and educators in Israel. Like the madrichot, these people act as bridges between their profession, the Ethiopian immigrant community and the host Israeli society. This role is very important in the context of early childhood development. The investigation involves more than a dozen open-ended interviews that begin with one question: 'Tell me about your work'. It is anticipated that the study will touch on immigrants, career development and advancement, cross-cultural communication, mediation and professional methodology. Once the interviews have been completed, a thematic analysis will be undertaken.

Selected Conclusions

Over nearly four years, from the spring of 1999 through the fall of 2002, the EI team in Israel attempted to gauge the effectiveness of the programmes of Almaya through an approach grounded on interviews. It followed from the nature of this approach that 'effectiveness' might be and, indeed, probably would be described quite differently by different stakeholders. For the EI team, effectiveness could therefore not be regarded only as static. It might become multifaceted, relative and dynamic, but fragile and elusive. It might be controversial. It might even be contradictory.

Childhood development programmes

A good example of the controversy and contradiction emerged in the opinions on Almaya's early childhood development programmes. The interviews made clear that the programmes are not a need expressed by the Ethiopian community. The composite picture of the community's priorities that appeared through the interviews revolved more around school-aged children, older adolescents, university students and the elderly. Almaya's focus on early childhood development thus seems to be driven by the organisation, but not the community.

However, despite the contrary opinions, one cannot fault Almaya. One reason is that Almaya's founding mission is tied to early childhood development programmes. The second reason is the situation of the immigrants. The immigrant children, families and communities are caught between two cultures. The younger children will better understand both cultures whether or not their parents desire to adapt or change. Childhood development programmes can respond effectively to the dynamics of this intergenerational transition by addressing the related problems raised among the children, who, beginning in school, are more likely to come into regular contact with members of the majority population and to desire to establish friendships and other bonds within their new homeland. Thus, it is promising that children (and their parents) who participated in the Almaya early childhood programmes show enhanced abilities to cope with change ten years on. It is also promising that the children are not rejecting their Ethiopian heritage. And it seems to make sense to implement the programmes as Almaya has done.

In any case, because the EI team did not succeed in reaching children as individual interviewees except indirectly though the interviews of the pre-school graduates ten years on, it may also be true that an exploration of the voices of younger Ethiopian children and their parents might have produced a slightly altered outcome in this regard, one more positive and favourable towards the early childhood development programmes.

The madrichot and the dyad

Almaya's groundbreaking commitment to reliance on madrichot drawn from the immigrant community was initially met with scepticism by potential partners, including government, but has since become an accepted model for training and service delivery across the country. Most projects dealing with newcomers in Israel now work with community-based agents of change as a matter of course. The Almaya madrichot and others like them have demonstrated their usefulness in bridging the gap between the host and immigrant communities.

Likewise, Almaya's innovative combination of a non-Ethiopian professional and an Ethiopian madricha, the dyad, has been a key element in the organisation's effectiveness not least because it has improved the sensitivity of professionals to the needs of immigrants.

Almaya has helped ensure this outcome. During training, which is delivered to the professionals and the madrichot together, the importance of knowledge of the community (the madricha) and technical expertise (the non-Ethiopian professional) is emphasised. This also tends to diffuse some of the natural tension between the madrichot and the professionals.

The long-term effects of the training of paraprofessionals on childhood development through initiatives such as Almaya's Home Visiting Programme deserve more attention. There is currently no readily available literature on the topic. The spread of Almaya's methods and programmes to national institutions in Israel should also be more thoroughly documented as a successful example of institutional learning.

Empowerment

The term 'empowerment' is repeated throughout Almaya's first descriptive documents, as are phrases such as 'providing women with the tools to go on, to go further'. All the EI findings on Almaya's effectiveness involve this concept, which is a deeply internalised construct among Almaya stakeholders. Indeed, the notion of 'empowerment' was the single most frequently (and spontaneously) mentioned issue in the interviews with the stakeholders.

The effectiveness of Almaya's commitment to empowerment has been tangibly demonstrated by the number of Ethiopian women who have been trained by the organisation and who are now working in the social service sector across the country. Likewise, women's leadership development is a mainstay of Almaya programmes.

Nonetheless, during the interviews, the subject of empowerment generated observations that were starkly contrasting and often full of irony.

Thus, some stakeholders said that Almaya is considered largely a women's organisation and that there is little room for Ethiopian professionals who are men. If this is so, it might seem to diminish the role of men who, in Ethiopian culture, are responsible for the education of their children. Indeed, some Ethiopian women maintained that the organisation's inability to address this issue in a meaningful way, despite concrete attempts, reflected a substantial failing. In fact, Ethiopian men and fathers are not well represented in Almaya programmes (or in the EI in Israel).

Whatever the accuracy of these views on the issue, one might profitably recognise that a gap in perceptions exists and that this gap represents a barrier. One might seek to close the gap. For example, as an initial step, it might be possible, within the programme, to open a space for fathers that does not require them to undergo professional training or possess a professional skill.

Meanwhile, some Almaya madrichot staff described Almaya's past organisational culture as 'paternalistic', and other stakeholders said there is a 'glass ceiling' within Almaya, one that does not allow Ethiopian women staff to rise above a certain level.

'. . . there are conflicts between the director and the board. The board feels that the workers from within the community are not being promoted. It seems that these women aren't appreciated; no one believes in their abilities despite the declaration "we believe in them and we developed them". . . . there is no room for these concepts in a place like this. We develop a model that we want others to adopt . . . . We have to let people try (at worst, they won't make it) and aspire to advance workers who will continue to develop. According to its principles, the people of the community should run the association. . . . In my opinion, the best way to learn is from experience, from trying. This makes me angry.'

– A madricha

An organisational crisis

Though the Israeli EI team had a rich experience working together with Almaya, there was an unexpected effect. The team was a witness to a significant organisational crisis and change in the life of Almaya beginning in 2001.

Almaya's involvement with the EI was not a causal factor in the crisis. The content and tone of many stakeholder interviews suggested that an organisational crisis was already looming and that a significant restructuring was likely. It does appear, nonetheless, that the evaluative aspects of the work of the EI team and the open nature of the interviewing and the feedback to programme stakeholders may have contributed indirectly to the evolution of the crisis by adding to already existing tensions within Almaya between a predominantly Ethiopian madrichot staff and board and a largely *faranjee* (white Israeli) professional staff and executive director.

Though the EI team held numerous feedback sessions on Almaya's effectiveness during site visits with senior staff, the madrichot and the executive board, the team did not feel it had to play any active role in addressing the crisis. However, the issue was still very stressful for team members. This was amplified by the fact that Almaya's executive director, who was at the centre of the tensions, was initially also a member of the Israeli EI team.

Then, the major restructuring occurred in Almaya, and there was a split that included the creation of a new non-governmental organisation doing related work. One consequence was that the EI team was left with no Almaya staff representation. The team decided that, having completed a large part of its fieldwork, the addition of a new member at such a late stage would not be productive. The team also felt that its findings about Almaya's programme effectiveness were of sufficient depth and importance that its report should be completed. Expectations had already been created among the various Almaya stakeholders.

Eventually, it may be possible and beneficial to revisit Almaya's organisational crisis. Such a review might shed light on how best to anticipate and facilitate natural organisational change. For the time being, one may be allowed to hope that the recent crisis in Almaya's leadership structure will prove to be only healthy growing pains.

5. Secular Pre-schools in Mombasa's Madrasas

Realising that their off-spring were being caught up in a vicious circle of poor education leading to poor jobs and that the root of the problem was inadequate preparation for primary school, a Muslim community in Mombasa, Kenya, began to establish a parallel system of pre-schools within local Muslim religious institutions. The curricula are grounded firmly on generally accepted practices and principles for active early childhood development. The relatively inexpensive system became popular and has since spread to Tanzania and Uganda.[1]

Kenya has made progress in laying a policy foundation for meeting the basic needs of children. Comprehensive national blueprints for action have been drafted. Nonetheless, the blueprints have yet to be translated into practical provisions to guide a substantive improvement in the well-being of children. Meanwhile, up to 70% of the deaths in the country among children under 5 years of age are due to malaria, diarrhoea, respiratory infections, measles, malnutrition and other preventable diseases and ailments.[2] More than one third of pre-primary-school-aged children are severely malnourished. Intestinal worms infect 40% of 4-to-5-year-olds. Morbidity associated with multiple intestinal parasitic infections is substantial. This is closely related to a lack of clean water and the inadequate standards of hygiene and environmental health in schools. Meanwhile, in a kind of trap, poor nutritional status and morbidity are having a negative effect on school performance.

In the Kenya spirit of *harambee* – pooling resources for a common good – and the Government's policy of liberalising educational and welfare services, many programmes have been initiated by non-governmental organisations and individuals to supplement the Government's efforts to ensure quality early childhood care services, including education.

One such programme is represented by the Madrasa Resource Centres (MRCs), which originated in an effort undertaken in 1986 to create community-based early childhood education centres among Muslim communities in Mombasa.[3]

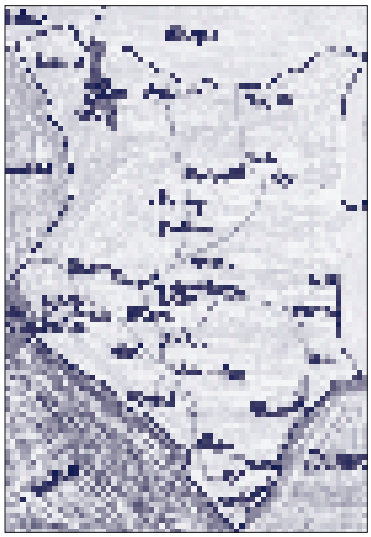
Historical Timeline of the MRC

Among Muslim communities in Kenya's coastal region, the access of children to local schools was inadequate, and those children who were admitted to formal school systems did not usually perform well. This was exacerbated by the environment within the communities, which were characterised by low educational attainment among parents and other adults, large families, high divorce rates, polygamous relationships and single parenthood.

The communities, which represented a relatively poor, underprivileged segment of the population, had only limited economic resources to address these problems. Thus, in the mid-1980s, Muslim leaders in the region requested assistance in discovering the reasons for the deficiencies in the education of their youth. The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) responded with funds that were used to undertake several studies.[4] These revealed that the inferior

1 The core of this summary relies on Mwaura (2003).
2 Kwamboka (2003).
3 The Madrasa Resource Centre, East Africa Office, PO Box 42409, Mombasa, Kenya, is a nationally registered non-profit organisation.
4 See AKF (1998), upon which much in the following text is based. AKF is a non-denominational, international development agency established in Geneva in 1967. When AKF began working with young children in Kenya, it was one of only two donors explicitly funding early childhood development programmes. The other was the Bernard van Leer Foundation. Today, the World Bank also contributes to such programmes in Kenya.

school performance could be traced back directly to the early years in education. The handicap of inappropriate preparation for primary school was making it difficult for children to gain access to formal education systems and, if admitted to these systems, to study properly and learn adequately.



A solution proposed

> *'Whereas education that has spread elsewhere in Kenya under Christian auspices has assumed a secular form, Islamic education is wholly centred in Islam as a religion and a social and cultural system. . . . The need for secular education was clearly recognised, as was also the danger that a neglect of it would increasingly place Muslims at a disadvantage in meeting the demands of a modern world.'*
>
> – Ominde Report[5]

Though the community leaders had learned that greater success in school was grounded on good pre-schools, there were no quality pre-schools in the Muslim community.

Muslims possess a traditional education system, which is very important in imparting religious education and practices and therefore highly valued by the Muslim community. The emphasis is on the memorisation and recitation of verses from the Holy Qur'ãn. This traditional option is, however, quite deficient in the application of practical or secular educational content. Children are taught by *maalims* (teachers) who have had very little, if any, training in widely accepted teaching methods. Indeed, some continue to rely on caning.

The children attending pre-schools typically went to Christian-sponsored schools in the morning and the *Qur'ãnic* schools in the afternoon. This left little time for them to relax or play, and they were exposed to contrasting curricula, one Christian and the other Islamic. This definitely caused confusion. Moreover, the children were usually admitted to low or average-quality primary schools, where they did not perform well. The vicious circle was completed when those who had performed poorly in primary school failed to obtain good jobs later on.

Nonetheless, the Qur'ãnic schools, called *madrasas,* were readily perceived by some members of the community as an appropriate option for an attempt to establish viable pre-schools for Muslim children. The under-resourced Muslim communities did not possess adequate funds or skills to invest in a new pre-school infrastructure, and the physical facilities of the madrasas were largely unused during the morning hours. Moreover, the need for an institution to coordinate education within the Muslim communities had already been recognised in the Kenya Education Commission Report of 1964, commonly referred to as the 'Ominde report'. The commission's main focus was primary education.

Thus, when Muslim leaders observed that the establishment of quality early childhood education centres within Islamic education systems would help satisfy the community's

5 Government of Kenya (1964), pages 34-36.

COURTESY OF CINDE

Colombia: Siblings in the Chocó

COURTESY OF CINDE

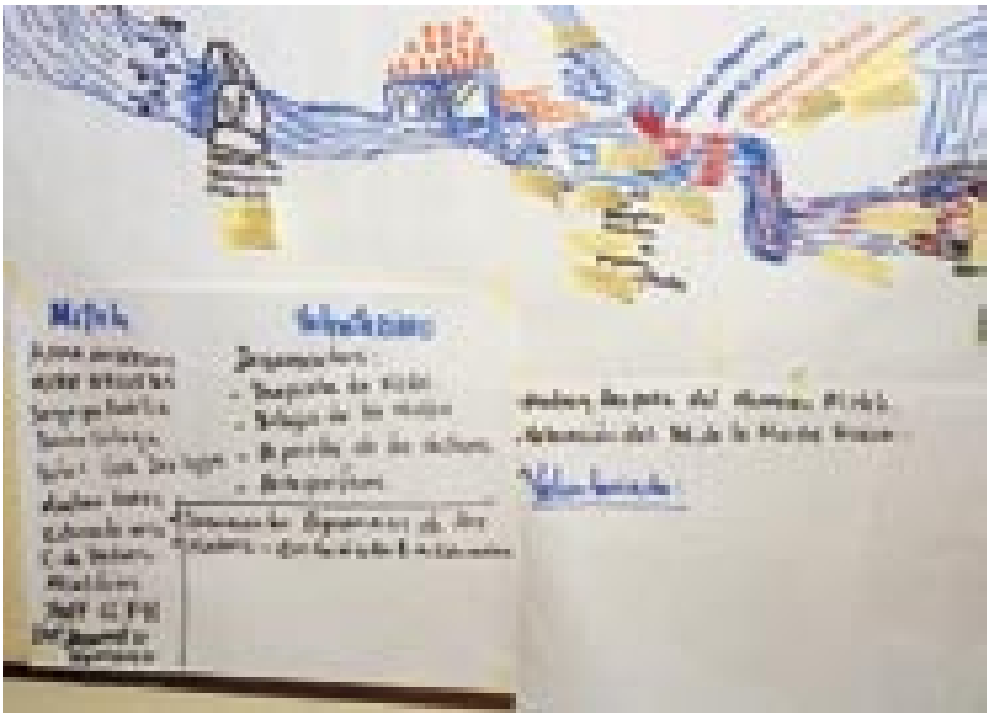
Colombia: Parents learn to play so they can teach their children

COURTESY OF CINDE

Colombia: A Chocó community

BVLF, ELAINE MENOTTI

Honduras: Madres guias and a CCF-H staff member



BVLF, J. LEONARDO YÁNEZ

BVLF, J. LEONARDO YÁNEZ

Honduras: The history of a programme in the course of a river

BVLF, ANGELA ERNST

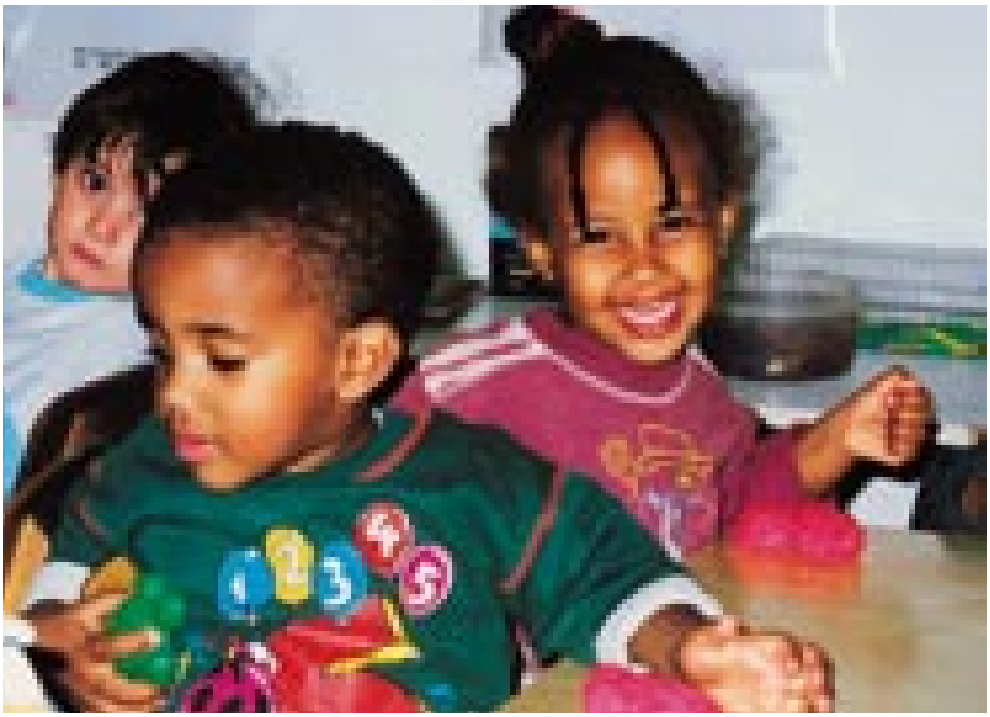
Honduras: Toolkits developed by CCF-H

BVLF, SARA GÓMEZ

India: A SEWA girl making incense sticks in a factory

BVLF, J. LEONARDO YÁNEZ

India: Children at a SEWA crèche

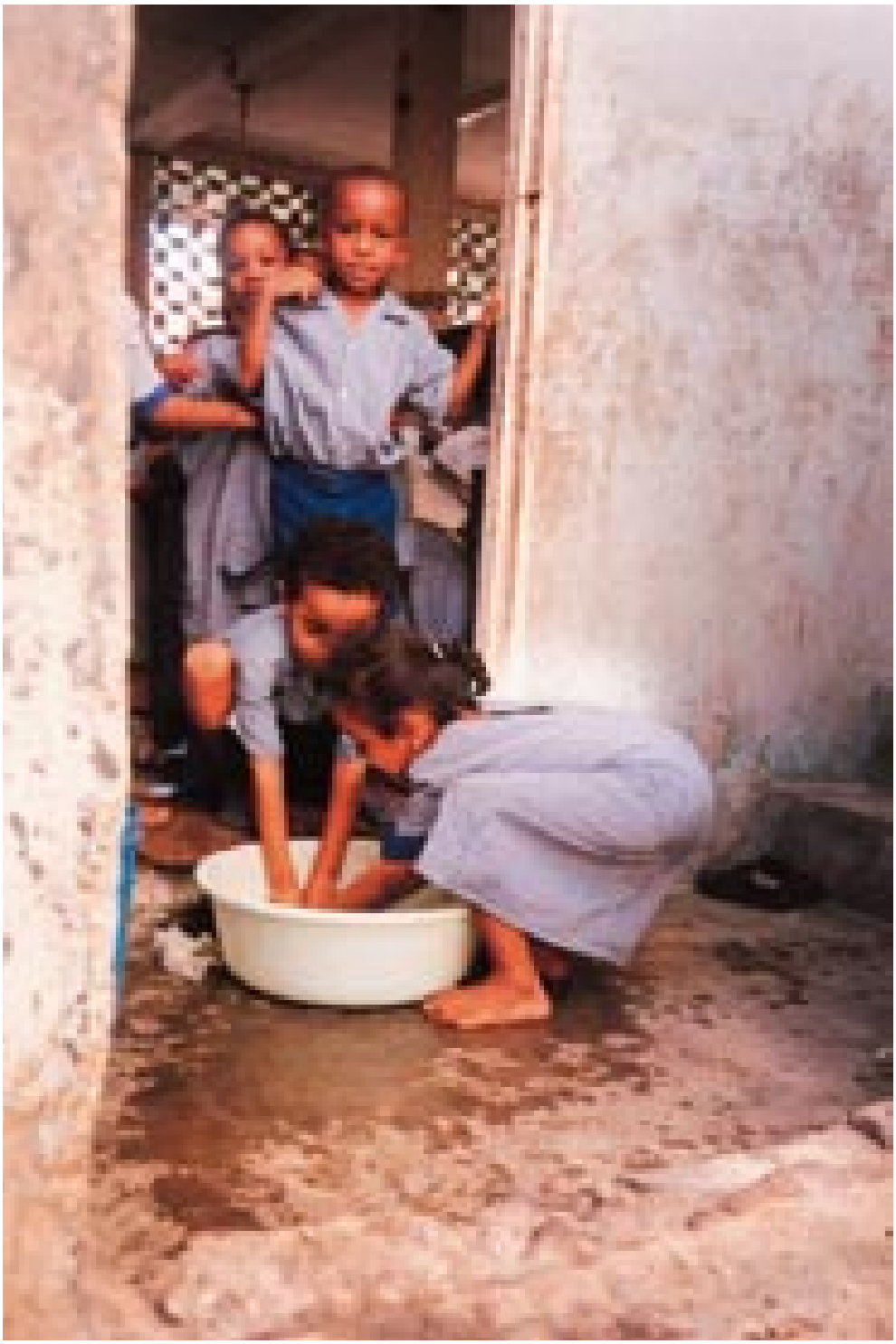


COURTESY OF ALMAYA

Israel: Beta Israel children at play

COURTESY OF ALMAYA

Israel: A madricha among children



COURTESY OF THE MRC

Kenya: Everyone helps out at Liwatoni school, Mombasa

COURTESY OF THE MRC

Kenya: Refreshment at an MRC pre-school

COURTESY OF THE MRC

Kenya: Work and play at Hibatul-ilm school, Kikambala

COURTESY OF SUMBI

Peru: A mother presenting ideas at a workshop

BVLF, J. LEONARDO YÁNEZ

Peru: Children in Huancavalica

BVLF, J. LEONARDO YÁNEZ

Peru: Outside the Pronoei centre, Huancavalica

BVLF, J. LEONARDO YÁNEZ

Peru: learning can be easy and fun

BVLF, J. LEONARDO YÁNEZ

Peru: Older children help watch over the young

COLF, FENY DE LOS ANGELES-BAUTISTA

The Philippines: Aeta children using modelling clay

COURTESY OF COLF

The Philippines: Aetas illustrating experiences as events on a calendar

COURTESY OF COLF

The Philippines: Aetas discuss treatments for the most common illnesses in the settlements

BVLF, BABETH LEFUR

Portugal: Creativity is a major focus within Águeda

BVLF, ROBERT G. MYERS

Portugal: Performing at a village festival

concern to have its children well grounded in their faith and retain their cultural identity, but also prepare them to make a good start in secular education and increase their readiness for later schooling, the observation had a precedent.

First steps

COURTESY OF THE MRC

Teacher and class, Neema school, Ukunda

Parents had to claim ownership of the pre-schools if they were to be successful. However, despite the willingness among leaders and the Government, the pre-school concept was not familiar among the poorer coastal communities of Kenya. The communities therefore had to become convinced of the necessity and the prospects for an early childhood education programme based on practical subjects that would prepare their children to enter and do well in good primary schools.

Prominent Muslim leaders, with the assistance of AKF, thus decided to implement a pilot project to muster the support of the madrasas, local educators and parents of young children in the coastal region. In 1986, under a grant from AKF, Bi Swafiya Said, a schoolteacher and one of a group of people on the coast seeking to raise opportunities for Swahili children, took up the challenge of mobilisation among the more marginalised communities in Mombasa. Her approach was simple. She introduced parallel pre-school activities into a madrasa that had been devoted exclusively to religious education until then.

There was resistance. Swafiya Said was sometimes branded as an 'agent of confusion' for trying to shift the traditional role of the madrasas, and men would refuse to allow her to speak in front of them. Other women involved in the effort encountered similar resistance. The 'curtain incident' offers a good example.

Planning in Mombasa advanced apace with inputs from many educators in Kenya and elsewhere. Demand for the pre-schools soon spread from one to ten madrasas and well beyond the city of Mombasa. The project flourished as more coastal communities joined in.

At first, the delivery of the integrated curricula was inadequate, and there was no very positive impact of the pre-school experience on school performance. The majority of pre-school 'graduates' continued to attend poorly performing public primary schools, where they typically repeated at least one class.

It was essential to train pre-school teachers who could impart what parents in the Muslim communities in the coastal region wanted and expected their children to know, while reflecting the latest knowledge about how children learn and enhancing the pre-school learning environment so that the madrasa pre-schools could be more effective.

The experience of the District Centres for Early Childhood Education, a programme of the Government's Institute of Education, was tapped. The institute was helping communities in many parts of Kenya provide early educational opportunities for children. Through stories, songs and educationally appropriate activities, the curricula developed in these centres focused on passing on to children the cultural and ethical values of communities such as the Boran in the north and the Maasai in the central and southern parts of the country. The programme, supported by AKF, the Bernard van Leer Foundation and UNICEF, had set up training centres for pre-school teachers in 16 districts.

The curtain

When Nakasozi, a small community with a growing number of Muslims, was visited by the MRC in 1998 to introduce the pre-school programme in a local madrasa, all welcomed the idea. Some in the community said, however, that, according to the Qur'ān, the project director and the trainers, all of whom were women, could not address the men directly. A man involved in the project therefore conducted the initial stages of contact with the community, but another problem then cropped up. The women in the community were typically in charge of the education of their children, but they were not being allowed to attend these meetings either. Women's place is in the home.

Part of the community supported the idea of involving women, however. After a long discussion, it was agreed that the women could attend the meetings and workshops, but strictly behind a curtain separating them from the men. If the women wished to communicate, they would have to do so through a man.

There was another heated discussion when the project director returned. Some in the community continued to be adamant that they could not be addressed by a woman, while others wanted to hear what the director had to say. A third group sought to compromise by proposing that the woman could stay if she remained behind the curtain. The solution represented a stride forward. The director was obliged to participate while behind the curtain, but she would be permitted to speak directly to the gathered community members, both women and men.

The school management committee, on the advise of the MRC, then decided to invite community members who were more radically religious to sit on the Nakasozi project committee so that they could understand the programme. Subsequent meetings were held, but the women were all now allowed to address the men from behind the curtain.

The MRC staff continued to press for the more active participation of the full range of community members, including women. After a number of meetings in which the women talked from behind the curtain, the radical group agreed that the curtain could be removed because, after all, they were discussing children, not religion.

Now, a new problem arose. This time some of the men decided that the best solution would be to hold one meeting for the women, and that this would then be followed by the men's meeting. The recommendations from the women would be presented to the men, who would make the decisions. This proved too complicated. First of all, the men needed someone, who turned out to be a woman, to take their notes and write the minutes. Second, whenever they wished to obtain information about what was happening in the pre-school, the most appropriate individual was the head of the pre-school, who was a woman.

The head of the pre-school was therefore asked to sit in on the meetings of the men to take the minutes and also respond to any questions. The MRC took this opportunity to conduct a workshop involving men and women. The opposition now collapsed, and it was decided by the committee that women should attend all meetings. Two women were selected for this role, and later the number was increased to four. These women have become the most energetic participants.

The curtain was up.

The establishment of the MRC

AKF agreed to assist in the creation of a centre to help meet the demand for trained pre-school teachers, and the first MRC was founded in Mombasa in January 1990. Staffed by dedicated women educators, the centre sought a balance between outreach and development activities. It was primarily a training facility for young women wishing to serve their communities, but it also concentrated on the development of technical inputs, such as teacher training methodologies, teaching manuals and curricula. Likewise, it provided coordination and support to help community pre-schools generate enhanced learning environments.

In response to requests from community leaders elsewhere, pilot projects were run on the islands of Unguja (Zanzibar) and Pemba in Tanzania and in Kampala, Uganda, culminating in the foundation of resource centres in Zanzibar (November 1990) and Kampala (January 1993).

An extensive assessment of the madrasa programme was carried out in 1994. The evaluation identified strengths, as well as barriers to the financial, technical and organisational sustainability of the madrasa pre-schools. In 1995, strategies to address these barriers were incorporated into a five-year plan. One of the initial steps under the plan was the opening of an East Africa regional office in Mombasa to coordinate and oversee the improvement of curricula, programme implementation activities and the management and operations of the MRCs.

Two technical units were created in 1995. The teacher training and mentoring unit was concerned with training and the provision of technical assistance to pre-school teachers and other stakeholders and beneficiaries, while the community development unit was engaged in sensitising communities to the benefits of quality early childhood education and care and then mobilising and supporting them in achieving these benefits.

To enhance the sustainability of the pre-schools, the curriculum was recast to be more child friendly and focused, and the training was reoriented towards fieldwork. Greater emphasis was placed on community participation, education and ownership. Additional trainers and community development officers were hired.[6] An internal monitoring and evaluation system involving staff and the community was also created.

The Madrasa Regional Research Programme was inaugurated in the regional office in 1998 to undertake studies and create systems that would assist in the identification of gaps, as well as provide information that would help in the decision-making process at all levels. One task of the programme was to explore the long-term impact of the MRCs on the beneficiaries. Another was the development of a management information system and a database that could be used for institutional monitoring and evaluation, but also for decision-making and research. Both required significant staff capacity-building. The mandate of the research unit grew to involve the assessment of pre-schools, the study of the context and features of programme effectiveness and the development of the capacity of staff to undertake monitoring and evaluation, including needs assessment and situational analysis.

The second five-year plan, initiated in 2000, aims to create community pre-schools that are well managed and financially sustainable, thus offering high-quality education that is affordable to local communities. It involves a parent education component that benefits parents and other actors. During this second phase, the focus is therefore on higher quality

6 The programme had 16 staff in 1995 (one in Uganda, six in Kenya and nine in Zanzibar). By 1998, the programme had 37 technical staff members (9 in Uganda, 12 in Kenya and 16 in Zanzibar).

childhood development. The approach is holistic in that it embraces health, nutrition, good parenting and special education. The MRCs in Kampala, Mombasa and Zanzibar will enter into two-year contracts with up to 200 communities wishing to start madrasa pre-schools.

COUTRTESY OF THE MRC

School management training

Focal Activities of the MRC

Community mobilisation

The creation of a pre-school starts with the mobilisation of a candidate community. The MRC sends a community development officer to the community to assist in the mobilisation effort and to support those who have expressed the wish to open a pre-school.

During the initial contact phase, the community development officer and other MRC staff undertake a needs assessment. This is centred on a workshop involving MRC staff and the community, including influential leaders such as the members of the local mosque committee. The discussions focus on the benefits of education for children and the community, the roles and responsibilities of parents and others in the community, the age at which children should begin formal education, the proper ways to encourage child development, and the impact if the needs of children are not properly satisfied. The community development officer explains the terms of the partnership under which the madrasa pre-school programme is willing to help the community finance, set up and manage the pre-school.

To reflect on the content of this first workshop in relation to their various educational requirements and their strategies to solve the problems they may encounter in early childhood education, development and care, community members also hold separate meetings organised by the mosque committee. If the wider community agrees that pre-school education is critical among its problem-solving options in child education and development, a second workshop is arranged at which participants, including MRC staff, discuss the functions and structure of the pre-school. This covers personnel, the election of a school management committee, the period of office and the responsibilities of the committee, the role of the teachers and the resolution of any gender issues in school management. It also covers the goals in education and in life that the community members foresee for their children.

The MRC contract

The linkage between the MRC and the community is defined in a contract signed by each of the parties. The contract sets the terms and conditions of the MRC-community partnership and the specific duties of each party in the creation and management of the pre-school.

The contract requires considerable investment in time and effort by the community. For example, a typical MRC contract might require a community to elect a viable school management committee, identify motivated young women for training as teachers, supply facilities conducive to the learning and play among children that are essential features of a pre-school, and officially register the school. Community participation is often called for in the construction of classrooms and the development of teaching aids and learning materials.

Training and mentoring

Once a contract is signed and the school management committee has been formed, the community development officer begins training committee members in management, finance, ways to cater for the demands of teachers, and the maintenance of school infrastructure.

Motivated women with basic education – an average of ten years of schooling – are selected by the community for training as early childhood educators. Often this is the only career training open to women at their level of educational attainment. Teacher training programmes last two years and provide a combination of centre- and site-based training, extensive supervision and feedback, as well as opportunities to work with peers. The sustained MRC support during the training creates an environment favouring a sort of active learning that is rare in community schools in Africa.

Integrated curricula and low-cost teaching aids

COURTESY OF THE MRC

Signing the contract for a rural pre-school

Developed by MRC educators, the curricula are grounded firmly on generally accepted practices and principles for active early childhood development. However, there is a distinctly local flavour because of the educational goals set by the national Ministry of Education and the choice of a learning content that is highly responsive to parental and community expectations that children be socialised into local mores. The curricula integrate practical secular modules and local religious components. Moreover, they introduce children to traditional oral and written stories and songs, narratives from the Qur'ān and art activities that incorporate African and Islamic motifs, as well as the *adab*, the rules of etiquette, courtesy and cleanliness rooted in East African culture. Likewise, the teaching aids and learning materials are generally constructed using low-cost, readily available local materials that are appropriate to the limited means of the poor, underprivileged Muslim communities. The teachers are trained to value the educational applications of simple, everyday objects such as seashells, coconuts, seed pods, soap boxes, bottle tops and scrap paper. The average pre-school is full of brightly coloured toys, posters and other decorative elements that help create a cheerful and cognitively stimulating setting for the early learning experience.

Endowment funds

The madrasa programme is experimenting with an innovative concept to supplement the income from fees in order to support pre-schools. MRC staff suggest that communities create small endowment funds for each pre-school, the annual income from which would supplement the pre-school's finances and facilitate the regular payment of teacher salaries. The endowment funds would be centrally managed for maximum efficiency. However, each endowment fund would be expected to consist of money raised by the community, matching grants from the madrasa programme and a one-off grant awarded to each school that

successfully completes a contractual two-year relationship with the MRC. During the contract period, the management committee of a candidate school is expected to have demonstrated an ability to maintain educational quality and financial accountability.

Community ownership

COURTESY OF THE MRC

Making toys, Khajrat school, Mombasa

It is made clear in the MRC contract that the community will ultimately 'own' the pre-school, though the MRC will fulfil a pivotal function in the interim. The goal of the MRC during implementation is therefore the creation of a pre-school that is sustainable. Because the communities are poor, this means that the programme must be cost sensitive and must rely on local human resources, which, in turn, means that the community must become aware of the merits of volunteerism from the start. Indeed, the entire mobilisation process is aimed at awakening the consciousness of at least a core group of people who have given thought to the community's needs in education and to strategies to fill these needs. Curiously, the communities sometimes realise the value of the process so thoroughly that they subsequently undertake similar mobilisation efforts independently to address other problems.

After a period of two or three years of intensive MRC support, monitoring and evaluation, the pre-school 'graduates'. This involves a 'validation' process to guarantee that the community has satisfied the contract in terms of community involvement and the creation of a well-functioning management committee and an appropriate and sustainable teaching and learning environment.

Determining Effectiveness

Early childhood development programmes are much more likely to have lasting benefits for children, families and communities if they are quality initiatives. There is a push among investigators, programme planners, practitioners and parents to identify the characteristics of a high-quality programme, to determine what constitutes 'success' in a programme and to mark off those aspects of interventions that make a difference in the development of young children.

The study of the effectiveness of the MRC programme was initiated as an endeavour to identify and describe the content, contexts and processes that go into the creation of projects that enable children and their families to achieve better lives. The initiative reflected an awareness of the fact that views on programme effectiveness are subjective. It is important to understand the opinions of the stakeholders and beneficiaries on the effectiveness of the MRCS.

This may seem to leave the approach in a fluid state whereby effectiveness will depend on whom, when and what. But this fluidity has the advantage of allowing programme stakeholders to see what others see. This diversity of perspectives helps generate more well rounded management decisions.

The 'effectiveness exploration' necessarily relied on participatory approaches towards data collection. There were two reasons for using several methods at once. First, this represented a way to crosscheck the information, and, second, it was an additional opportunity to build capacity among the MRC staff and boost their community awareness. The various approaches, which are described below, were well received and became very popular with the MRC staff and with the communities because they are simple, straightforward and full of humour.

- *The wheels.* In this method, respondents are asked to think of the programme as a dynamic machine with wheels. The wheels are the cause of any movement forward. The hubs of the wheels contain the main dimensions of the MRCs. The spokes are the elements of effectiveness for each of the dimensions. The outermost parts of the wheels are in contact with the challenges faced by the centres.

  Many things can happen to the wheels, including punctures that hamper the progress forward. When this happens, something has to be done for the journey to continue. A search must be initiated to find ways to allow the journey to go on. There have already been many punctures during the journey. Where have these occurred?

  The respondents must consider independently the elements that have been involved in the successes of the programme and the reasons for the failures. They fill in all the elements they believe make up the various parts of the wheels.
- *The African dish.* This method was used to discover the thoughts of MRC staff about the dimensions of effectiveness within the general framework of the dynamic participation of the MRC stakeholders.

  In the cooking of an African dish, there are inputs, the cooking process, the dish and the satisfaction of those who partake in the meal. Each ingredient and the contribution of each person must be appropriate to the task. Otherwise, the meal will not meet expectations.

  By comparison to the cooking of an African dish, the respondents were asked to identify the various ingredients in the MRC programme, the elements in the process of preparation and the different outputs of each process.
- *Roses and thorns.* The interviewees were presented with pictures of roses and thorns or pictures of happy or gloomy faces. They were asked to look at the pictures and then think about features of the programme that they might somehow connect with these pictures. They were asked to discuss the reasons for their choices.
- *The tree in a shamba.* In this method, the MRC and the pre-schools were compared to a fruit tree in a *shamba* ('garden'). The tree has roots, branches, leaves and fruit. In order for the tree to produce good fruit, it must be cared for. The interviewees discussed what each part of the tree represented in terms of the MRC and the pre-schools. With this comparison in mind, each interviewee was asked to discuss what might go wrong in the programme or in a pre-school to produce a poor outcome.
- *The pictures.* In this method, questions about selected photographs were employed to elicit responses about the MRCs and the pre-schools among programme participants. The photographs were chosen so as to represent a typical cross-section of activities related to each madrasa pre-school.

  For each pre-school, interviews were conducted with two pupils (one currently in the pre-school and one about to enter primary school), one teacher, two parents (one parent of each of the two pupils), a member of the school management committee and a community member.

An attempt was made to keep the questions open ended. Typical questions were: 'What's going on in the picture?' 'What's the picture about?' 'How does it relate to you?' 'How does it relate to your experience with the school?' 'Imagine that you are one of the people in the photograph; how do you feel?' 'What are you doing?' 'What are you thinking?'

This method of prompting with pictures and photographs, asking open-ended questions and role-playing seemed a useful way to focus the attention of the constituents of the schools and the MRC so that they would provide useful information about effectiveness.

- *Questionnaires.* The staff were given a questionnaire that investigated their perceptions of effectiveness. The questionnaire was designed to bring out information about the concept of effectiveness, the dimensions and elements of effectiveness, the human factors in each dimension, the patterns, themes, relations and logical connections surrounding effectiveness, and attitudes and values as sources of motivation leading to effectiveness.
- *Interviews.* In individual interviews, the chairmen, programme directors, management staff, chief trainers, community development officers and other key persons were asked about the reasons they were attracted to the work of the MRCs, the vision they had of the MRCs when they joined, the changes that had taken place since then, the main elements in any successes or failures, the main challenges encountered and the goals they now had for the MRCs.
- *Focus groups.* Focus group discussions were conducted with parents, school management committee members and teachers on the successes and challenges they had witnessed in the MRCs and the views they had on what the future should hold.

Findings on Effectiveness

The approaches adopted in the effectiveness study have been significant in that they have created opportunities for the stakeholders to reflect on and appreciate the history and the dynamics of the programme and the strategies it has employed. They have also represented a chance for the staff to gain knowledge about qualitative study techniques and apply them in field assessments and community mobilisation activities.

The following findings were reported by the team.

1. *The timing of a project and the 'platform' or environment of an intervention are important. This includes the existence of receptive local and national government policies, a consciousness within the target community of its problems and needs and an ability to identify the potential long-term benefits of the intervention.*

   'The community requested the programme, and this is an important factor in MRC effectiveness. The project came from the community, which meant their total commitment. All they needed was leadership.'

   – Focus group discussion with an MRC national chairman

COUTRTESY OF THE MRC

MRC graduation of a rural school

The timing of the start of the MRC programme was crucial. When the MRC came into being, the Muslim communities had generally become aware of the problems caused by the lack of an appropriate early childhood education infrastructure. A favourable governmental policy framework was in place, and the existence of a nationwide early education option gave a point of reference for the MRC programme. The concepts of harambee and cost-sharing were well accepted in the country. Influential persons who valued secular education and understood the problems of the community had voiced their encouragement. The idea of an Islamic institution that would integrate religious and cultural education had already been put forward in influential reports such as the Ominde report. AKF was receptive.

2. *The manner in which a project is introduced to a target community is crucial, as are the personalities of the individuals promoting the project among the community members, the backing these individuals receive and the attitude of potential supporters.*

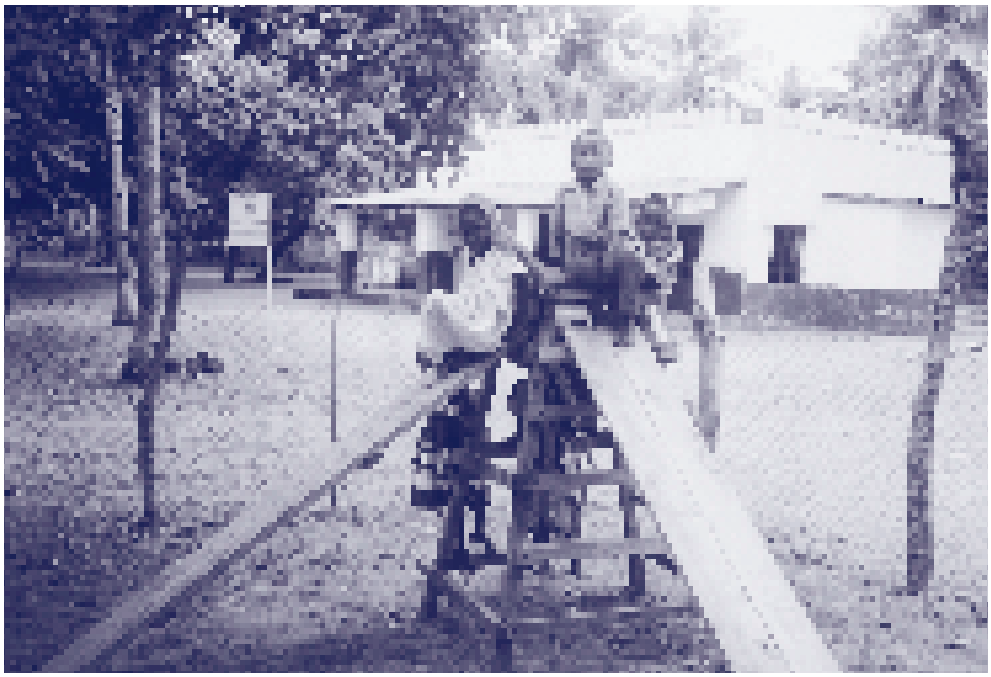
The MRC staff identified a clear pathway into the communities: the mosque committees. The high opinion enjoyed by the members of these committees among the communities helped facilitate the initial stages of the project. Moreover, Bi Swafiya Said, who guided the implementation process, was a person of integrity and gained respect because of her strong personality and the esteem accorded her education and her family. The effectiveness of the programme may therefore be due in part to the character and position of the initiator within the community in Mombasa.

3. *Taking the time to study the community and the problems to be addressed so as to refine the strategies and activities of the programme is very important.*

Studies were carried out to determine the overall social conditions and the strengths and weaknesses of each community. The results of the studies then guided the strategies of the MRC programme, which were adjusted so as to be compatible with the requirements of children in poor, underprivileged Muslim communities, especially the problems in education that had been identified and expressed by these communities. The communities desired quality pre-schools in which their children could acquire both practical and religious knowledge and be enabled to compete in the secular school system. Active learning curricula were developed through negotiations with the communities, which participated in the creation of classrooms, teaching aids and learning materials. This step was undertaken also because it was important for sustainability to ensure that the communities accepted, supported and claimed ownership of the programme.

4. *The programme structure must cover all the crucial dimensions of project activities. By the same token, it is important to plan for and implement appropriate management schemes and quality controls.*

The MRC approach has involved well-thought-out efforts by community development officers to promote community awareness, mobilisation and empowerment. Training and mentoring initiatives are carried out by trainers. So as to foster quality control, these structures are all overseen by a national board and a regional policy-making committee.



COUTRTESY OF THE MRC

Children on a slide

5. *The project should be organised so as to create a positive sense of competition among the component activities. This competition should act as a system of checks and balances.*

In each country, the MRC is overseen by a national board headed by a chairman. The MRCs are each managed by a programme director, and each school has a lead community development officer and a lead trainer.

There are meetings at the regional level once a year, and as many meetings as necessary are held by the national boards at the country level. Twice a year, the programme directors come together in what is called 'the PD forum' to examine regional issues and plans of action. The MRC staff in each country meet on a weekly basis. Problems and progress are discussed openly at all these meetings.

The parallel structures in the communities and in each country and the regular meetings arranged among individuals at each level of programme management have naturally generated a sense of friendly competition across the region and within each group, while ensuring that innovations and experiences are shared.

6. *Simple but comprehensive structures for research and for monitoring and evaluation should be put in place. These structures should take into account all the beneficiaries and stakeholders, and must provide pathways to receive stakeholder feedback. The capacity of staff to receive and properly assess this feedback must be built up.*

A special MRC unit headed by a liaison officer conducts research, monitoring and evaluation. In each country, the work of this unit and the regular meetings of the other units, the community officers and trainers, and the national board form a participatory

system of research, assessment, and monitoring and evaluation. This system has assisted the MRC staff in planning and decision-making. Through the system, the stakeholders, including the project communities, have been able to gain a global vision and strategic understanding of the programme. It has helped fix the ownership of the programme within the communities, and, above all, contributed to the development of the communities. The system has been a significant factor in the impact the programme has had on the primary beneficiaries.

7. *The spirit of unity, hard work and community service must be constantly reinforced among the individuals and groups involved in a programme.*

Because of the nature of the programme, participants often tend to be motivated by the feeling that they are helping their children and their communities and serving their religion. Likewise, the experience of witnessing children doing well at school is transferred into a personal sense of accomplishment and a greater sense of unity within the family and community. In turn, this encourages more support for early childhood education. Spiritual satisfaction thus becomes a motivational force behind the programme.

> *'It is an amazing dedication that I see among the staff: no grumbling for working overtime; they are always cheerful even when they are tired. It's amazing. They cannot be paid for their work through a salary. It is only God who can pay them.'*
>
> – A national chairman

The staff and the project communities operate according to the dictum that, at the end of the day, it is not what one has achieved for himself that is important, but what one has helped others to achieve. Mutual support and accountability in the delivery of services create a sense of responsibility towards the success of the programme.

8. *The relationship between the programme and the donor should be properly defined at the start. It should be clear that more than funds are involved. The relationship should be based on a common view of desired outcomes rather than authoritarian management practices. It should be characterised by a friendly guiding spirit.*

> *'AKF's role has been to share ideas about other effective projects with us. . . . [it] sends us reading materials and organises our participation in international seminars and workshops. Also, they give us technical advisory support directly. . . . AKF is not just a donor . . . . They give us an external point of view. Also, by sending us visitors, they boost our moral, and this is also good for the pre-schools because it gives them confidence that people are concerned and recognise what they have accomplished.'*
>
> – A staff member

AKF gives the programme staff the freedom to determine the activities they will implement, but it helps motivate the staff by taking an interest in the impact of the programme among the communities.

9. *Programme staff must view each problem as a challenge that signals an unmet demand of the stakeholders and beneficiaries and that requires immediate attention.*

'In the MRC, we don't talk about problems and failures. We talk about challenges because we believe that every problem has a solution.'

– A staff member

The ability to meet numerous challenges at every stage of programme implementation is a clear indicator of the effectiveness of the MRCs. For example, when communities have refused outright to accept the programme, the staff, through persistent advocacy, have sometimes been able to replace this resistance with a spirit of volunteerism.

The pre-school endowment funds have sometimes been non-performing, and fees are not always paid, which means that salaries are often low and irregular. This leads some staff to search for more well-paying options. Consequently, training and retaining good specialists – a problem of sustainability – represent another challenge. The MRCs have faced this challenge by discovering ways to rely on local community resources.

Nonetheless, there are also many challenges that have not encountered a ready solution. For instance, an MRC once spent a lot of time and effort to convince a community to build new classrooms for the pre-school. After the community did this and the first group of children had gone on to primary school, the school management committee decided to use the rooms for a first grade class, and the next group of pre-schoolers was obliged to go back into the old classrooms, which were located in a mosque.

Not all challenges are of the entirely negative sort. There is also the challenge of success. While community development officers in some pre-schools in Kenya have complained of declining enrolments, one pre-school saw its enrolment double to nearly 100 children and was forced to turn away applicants for lack of space. What was the trick? The teachers prepared the children so thoroughly and the children did so well in the standard entry interviews for the local primary school that the school principal and his staff wanted to visit the pre-school. The story spread, and suddenly parents in neighbouring communities wanted to enrol their children in the pre-school.

The need to have a wider vision is another sort of challenge. Thus, planning is under way to develop curricula for madrasa primary schools. The parents are requesting this effort after seeing the success of the integrated, active learning curricula in the madrasa pre-schools.

One pre-school management committee started a primary school. Enrolment improved because the older siblings could now bring along the younger ones. Soon, the children were being crowded into the small classrooms, which were not kept in good repair. The games and other recreation equipment were taken over by the older children. The primary school principal became the administrator of the pre-school, though she had no pre-school background, and additional conflicts and contradictions soon emerged.

A university professor was appointed the treasurer of another pre-school, while the pre-school management committee chairman had not received even a secondary certificate. The human ego came into play, and the two could not cooperate.

MRC policy advocates the hiring of teachers from the local communities. In one community, a man donated land for the pre-school. His son used his influence to get his wife appointed as one of the teachers. Because the couple lived next to the school, it was very convenient for the community development officer and the woman frequently to discuss issues related to the school. However, the husband became suspicious and demanded that his wife give up the teaching job. In an attempt to force her to do this, he mistreated her. She still refused. Everyone in the MRC became worried. The MRC arranged a meeting with the

COUTRTESY OF THE MRC

A break

school management committee, the man who had donated the land, the son, the son's wife and two other relatives. It soon became obvious that, in some situations, the MRCS cannot succeed in empowering women unless they also target the education of the men.

> *'We are open to discussion and even criticism. It's what makes us grow. We have to accept each other [so as to achieve] mutual learning, for better programme implementation and development.'*
>
> – A staff member

10. *The impact of an early childhood programme must be measured in terms of the quality of the programme, but, more importantly, it must also be measured in terms of the progress achieved among the children who are the primary beneficiaries.*

The accomplishments of the madrasa programme have been quite remarkable. Over the past five years, well over 150 new pre-schools have been constructed, and more than 180 poor communities in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda now manage their own pre-schools. The programme has enhanced the confidence and the capacity of these communities through the training of hundreds of community members in the financial and organisational skills necessary to run the pre-schools.

Nearly 1,000 young women have been trained as teachers, thereby helping to empower them within their communities. The teachers themselves have reported that, through the training, they have gained greater self-awareness and self-confidence and have learned to express themselves better in public. They say that children are now more responsive to them, which makes them feel good about themselves as individuals. Their new skills and newfound

confidence have been transferred into their lives at home and their relationships outside work. Their creativity has been enhanced, including in personal problem-solving.

> *'There is this lady who is a teacher in one of the MRC pre-schools. She happens to also be a councillor. That means she is in politics and gets more pay from the councillor position. But what makes her insist on being a pre-school teacher? She cannot leave her base. Her base is the mrc and children . . . .'*

Increasing numbers of communities are coming forward to take charge of their pre-schools and sustain them. Their willingness to do so shows that community-based initiatives can provide quality, affordable early childhood education, thereby improving dramatically later access to formal education. The programme has demonstrated that it is possible to work through traditional institutions, such as madrasas, to integrate secular and religious education. The acceptance by communities of this approach indicates that learning that is rooted in cultural traditions and ethical values, whether or not they are based on a faith, can be successfully imparted in conjunction with secular education. The popularity of the short courses delivered by the MRC in Mombasa to educators at other, non-MRC pre-schools – both private and government-funded pre-schools and pre-schools open to students of other faiths as well – points to the wide applicability of this approach.

Most importantly, close to 10,000 young children have benefited from the active learning methodology of the programme. The learning environment created by the communities is quite good. The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale has been used to evaluate the teaching and learning environment among pre-school children in East Africa. The children taught in MRC pre-schools are being exposed to a significantly better learning environment than are children in other pre-school systems. This translates into a better cognitive performance among the MRC pre-school children.

The Road Ahead

The challenge of the play environment

An MRC pre-school sustainability survey was completed in 2001. It found that the classroom environment in the average pre-school is relatively well maintained for at least three years after the pre-school has 'graduated'. However, some signs of decline are noted after two years. In particular, the play environment is rather neglected.

The play environment that supports an active learning approach should be rather good. At graduation, the pre-schools normally possess quality play equipment. It appears that, following graduation, this is the first area to be neglected. One might ask if the school management committees and the teachers have adequately grasped the key role of the play environment in the growth and learning of children. Have the parents understood the importance of play in active learning? Perhaps the MRCs should focus on educating parents not only about nutrition, but also about how learning can be enhanced among children through play.

Teachers seem to be succumbing a little too easily to parental pressure to begin primary school subjects in pre-school. This may have affected some of the fundamental practices within the MRC curricula, including the integration of religion and secular education, as well as play in the active learning methodology. These issues should be addressed so that teachers do not abandon the essentials of good education practices.

Advocacy

Most of the countries in the region have only recently started to formulate early childhood development policies. The MRCs are being consulted on a regular basis in this process and are participating enthusiastically through the formulation of guidelines, the creation of curricula and the design of training courses and by undertaking advocacy through participation in meetings and workshops.

In Kenya, the madrasa programme is part of a pilot programme supported by the Ministry of Education and the World Bank that aims to lead to a meaningful and effective early childhood development policy.

MRC Uganda has been involved over the last two years on national curriculum committees that have contributed to the on-going policy dialogue.

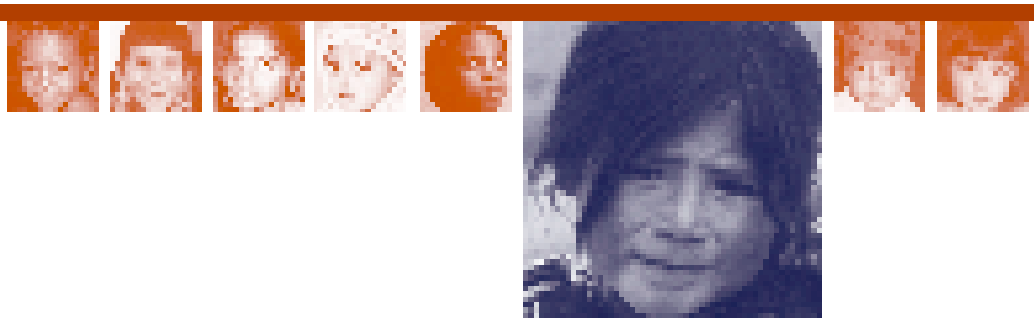
A positive relationship with government departments has developed as the reputation of the MRCs has spread. Likewise, the MRCs are now recognised by other organisations involved in early childhood development, including the German Agency for Technical Cooperation, Plan International, Redd Barna, Save the Children, UNICEF and the World Bank.

Pre-schools in Kenya

There are now over 26,000 pre-schools in Kenya, with an enrolment of 1.1 million children.[7] However, the national pre-school enrolment rate is still very low, at 35% of the pre-school age group. Of the nearly 43,000 pre-school teachers, only about 46% are trained. Data accumulated by the Ministry of Education between 1982 and 1997 on public pre-school education show poor teacher-child ratios. There was an average of more than 40 children per pre-school teacher, including untrained teachers.

There is thus much room in the country for community-based initiatives such as the madrasa pre-schools.

7 Ministry of Education (2001).



6. EI Tools on the Shores of Lake Titicaca

The Effectiveness Initiative in Peru focused on a 'non-formal' early years education programme that was begun in 1968 among poor ethnic minorities in Puno state. The low-cost programme became quite popular and was eventually adopted by the Ministry of Education as a viable alternative to the formal system. The EI exploration was able to gather a wide-range of feedback about the possible sources of effectiveness of the programme from staff and community members, particularly parents, but also children. The text supplies a sampling of the findings of an EI interview process in four communities in highland Puno.[1]

Wawa Uta and Wawa Wasi

A nutrition education project for mothers was undertaken among several Aymara- and Quechua-speaking villages on the shores of Lake Titicaca in the state of Puno in highland southern Peru in 1968.[2] The infant mortality rate there was then above 150 per 1,000 live births, and malnutrition was widespread. The project was initiated under the impulse of Ramón León, a Catholic priest, by young volunteers from a nearby university. As part of the instruction, the mothers made mid-morning snacks for the small children they had brought along for the gatherings, which lasted several hours each weekday. These snacks quickly evolved into a supplementary feeding component. The food was donated by Caritas Peru.[3]

Eventually, pre-schooling was added for 3-to-5-year-olds. Soon, the pre-school idea became more ambitious, and a community programme was started to care for young boys and girls, allow them the opportunity to play and talk together regularly, help them develop mentally and socially and instruct them in preparation for entry in primary school. Little by little, the programme became based on centres, each called *wawa uta* or *wawa wasi* ('children's home' in the Aymara and Quechua languages), which aimed to favour development in the poor villages through education opportunities for very young children. Certified teachers were assigned to several of these centres, but an evaluation in 1969 suggested that community volunteers would be more effective, while the professional teachers could perform a supervisory role. This suggestion was implemented.[4]

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education decided that non-formal education programmes should be viewed as an acceptable alternative to formal pre-schools since they were less costly and would allow more children to be reached. It was clear that universal coverage could not be achieved if formal programmes were to be required everywhere. Recognition of the Puno children's homes by the ministry followed in 1972.

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1 The core of this summary is based on Vásquez de Velasco et al. (2003).

2 This and much of the following information is found in Fujimoto and Villanueva (1984) and Myers (1993).

3 Active since 1955, Caritas Peru has more than 50 branch organisations operating throughout Peru. It is a member of Caritas Internationalis, a confederation of Catholic relief, development and social service organisations present in over 198 countries and territories worldwide.

4 The programme thus became a model for *educación no escolarizada* ('non-formal education' or, more literally, 'non-scholastic education'). In many countries of Latin America, day-care or kindergarten (ages 0 to 3) and pre-school (4 to 5 or 6) are considered together as one conceptual entity known as 'pre-school', that is, 'previous to primary school'. 'Formal' pre-schools rely on certified teachers, usually former primary school teachers, who are paid by the Ministry of Education and follow a standard curriculum set by the ministry. Formal pre-schools must also meet higher criteria in terms of facilities. 'Non-formal' pre-schools depend less on certified teachers and the imparting of knowledge about subjects organised into standard curricula. They are nonetheless officially recognised as education establishments. In this summary, 'formal', 'non-formal' and 'pre-school' are understood as explained here.

The number of homes rose slowly at first, and relatively little expansion occurred in Puno state. In order to enhance the quality and sustainability of the community-based programme, the Government was asked to furnish support. In 1973, the Ministry of Education assumed full responsibility for the programme, which was renamed the *Programas no Escolarizados de Educación Inicial* ('Non-Formal Early Education Programmes'), or 'Pronoei' in the Spanish acronym.[5] A group of Pronoei teachers was trained in the 'discovery' method of Jean Piaget, the Swiss psychologist renowned for child development studies grounded on the search for an answer to the question 'How does a child learn?'. An 'active learning' curriculum that had been adapted to meet local needs and incorporate local culture also began to be applied through the programme.

In the context of a sweeping educational reform and a more general endeavour to promote rural improvement, a major childhood development initiative was launched in Puno state with the assistance of UNICEF. The initiative involved an integrated, multisectoral approach within which a place was found for the non-formal Pronoei centres. The centres thus came to represent one of the most innovative approaches in the country for the care and education of young children from poor communities. The model was replicated throughout Puno state.

Around the same time, a decision was made to assign priority in the national development strategy to economically and socially deprived rural areas and urban shantytowns. In line with this decision, curriculum guidelines and training and teaching materials in early years education were field tested and distributed nationally. The non-formal Puno model was replicated in other states of Peru, sometimes spontaneously, sometimes through the Ministry of Education and sometimes with the support of non-governmental organisations and international agencies, thereby providing an alternative to the formal pre-school system.

In 1975, for instance, an integrated approach that had been adapted from the community-based Puno model was implemented in shantytowns in the Lima area. The project, which was supported by UNICEF, involved the construction of a health centre and a pre-school centre to serve up to 5,000 people. Paraprofessionals were trained to carry out a series of health, nutrition and early education activities under the management of local communities. Surveys were conducted to determine community needs, and a monitoring system was created.

USAID funded a project called 'Pre-School Education as an Incentive for Community Development', which established non-formal programmes in the states of Apurimac, Cusco, Puno and San Martín. The project, which began in 1981 and eventually reached over 2,000 villages, covered training, management, Pronoei-centre construction (with community assistance), community nutrition and supplementary feeding.

USAID and UNICEF assisted an urban community-centre programme that was an offshoot of the experience in the Lima shantytowns. The programme supported the manufacture of educational materials using locally available educational resources.

Starting in 1987, the Bernard van Leer Foundation assisted in the realisation of a project through which 20 peri-urban pre-schools were supported by a well-equipped centre that also trained the paraprofessionals who ran the pre-schools.

Other, less extensive programmes managed by private organisations sometimes included components in addition to early years education, such as a community-based nutrition component or primary health care. These programmes differed, but they all relied on

5 'Pre-school' had recently become a government priority. It had been officially renamed educación inicial ('initial education' or 'early years education') in 1972 and had been restructured to include all children aged 0 to 5. See the previous note for a clarification of the terms.

paraprofessionals, community participation (variously defined) and a mix of services.

Before this across-the-board expansion, the coverage of pre-school programmes among 3-to-5-year-olds had been less than 5% in Peru, and nursery schools had been available for fewer than 1% of all 0-to-2-year-olds. Home-based programmes had not existed, and maternal and child health programmes had not yet become well established.

The growth in care and development services directed at 0-to-6-year-olds was now dramatic, however. In 1975, there were about 300 Pronoei pre-schools in the country. By 1983, there were more than 7,000. Most of the expansion was due to programmes for 3-to-5-year-olds. It has been estimated that over 500,000 children, or approximately one third of all children in that age group (approximately 1.6 million), were enrolled in pre-schools in Peru by the mid-1980s. This represented a sevenfold boost in outreach in about a decade. Around 250,000 children – close to half the total in pre-schools or about one sixth of the age group – were accounted for through the Pronoei.

At this stage, some of the characteristics of the Pronoei programme as it is today had already emerged. Thus, there is a more or less standard avenue for the participation of communities, which construct or otherwise provide the location for the children's home or programme centre. The programme is implemented by *animadores* ('activity organisers'). These generally minimally educated volunteers from the community undergo a few weeks' initial training in child development, teaching techniques and the construction of educational materials before assuming the duties of teachers, one per centre.[6] They are normally selected through an open community assembly and obtain a modest stipend to cover the cost of training. Each group of animadores is supervised by a *docente coordinador* ('teacher coordinator'), a certified teacher. A *docente especialista* ('specialist teacher'), a certified teacher who has become specialised in early years education, coordinates each zone or region. The coordinators and specialist teachers are employed by the public sector, while the animadores are not. A parents committee might run the day-to-day affairs of each centre.

In some cases, income-generating projects have been created as part of the programme, and, in most instances, the food supplied through government channels to feed the children is supplemented using local contributions, which are also directed at the satisfaction of other programme needs. In these ways, the programme takes root in the community. This is reinforced because the animadores and the coordinators tend to identify closely with the communities and with the programme and dedicate much effort to improving both.

Likewise, within each community, there is often a feeling of ownership of the Pronoei centre. This is encouraged because the community can select the animadores. The community is also free to add non-educational activities, and the Pronoei centres do not require large community outlays, but depend only on local construction and the employment of locally

6 Initially, the animadores were all men, and men are still active in this role, though women *(animadoras)* are now more usual.

available materials.

Meanwhile, a few dozen children meet four or five mornings per week in each Pronoei centre. They receive a nutritious meal cooked by participating mother volunteers. They also learn a second language, Spanish, which can help them adapt successfully in the formal educational system later on.

An evaluation in the mid-1980s found that the Pronoei children were more well prepared for primary school in terms of cognitive development and social skills relative to a comparable sample group of children who had not participated in the Pronoei.[7] This was so despite the fact that the facilities of many of the Pronoei centres and the qualifications of the animadores were rudimentary. However, as measured by repetition rates, the Pronoei children did not generally retain their advantage as they moved through primary school, presumably because of serious problems in the quality and management of the primary schools available to them. The programme's influence on children's nutritional status was moderate and indirect and seemed to vary according to location. The programme appeared to increase community involvement and awareness through stimulation for the creation of community groups that addressed issues raised within the programme. Based on enrolment figures and not counting the contributions of local communities in labour and materials, the annual per-child cost of the average centre was around $28, or less than half the corresponding cost of formal pre-school programmes.

The results of the evaluation of the cost and impact of the Pronoei supported the conclusion that, relative to the particular setting, target groups and objectives, the programme was cost effective. The evaluation suggested that effectiveness could be achieved at low cost over time in a large-scale non-formal pre-school programme. It indicated that greater effectiveness would be achieved if the quality of the local primary school programmes could also be raised.

There are now over 17,000 Pronoei centres in Peru. They are organised into the 'early education network', a cooperative effort that groups child development experts, animadores, coordinators and assistants and is supported thanks to the participation of communities, parents and other collaborators, including governmental and non-governmental institutions. This participation permits the Pronoei to provide nutrition education to mothers and supply integrated education and deliver food, nutrition and health care services and other forms of assistance among hundreds of thousands of children 0 to 6 years of age.

The EI Approach

Methodology

In 1999, the Pronoei was chosen to participate in the Effectiveness Initiative of the Bernard van Leer Foundation. One reason for the selection was the fact that the programme had been in operation for more than 30 years.

Given that government staff change frequently and, because of their official duties, might also be less free to share their experiences and their time, coordination with the Department of Initial and Special Education of the Ministry of Education promised to be delicate, so it was decided to seek a competent counterpart organisation that could gather the information and deal with the various governmental and non-governmental administrative

7 See Halpern and Myers (1985), Myers et al. (1985) and Inter-American Development Bank (1999).

bodies involved in the programme. For this purpose, *Servicios Educativos y Propuesta Social* ('Educational Services and Social Design'), known as 'Sumbi', was chosen among several qualified candidates.[8]

The main objective of the EI study in Peru, as spelled out in the Sumbi proposal, was to contribute to the understanding of the nature of the effectiveness of the programme so as to enrich projects aimed at children. In particular, the study would facilitate the transfer of knowledge on concepts and methods that favour high-quality projects.

Effectiveness was to be conceptualised through action research that would focus on an historical reconstruction of the Pronoei programme at two sites and the identification of the lessons learned at these sites. Particular attention was to be paid to several issues, including the history and characteristics of the programme, participation, especially that of parents, and views on the performance of the animadores and coordinators. The perspective would be that of the various stakeholders. The premise was that each participant should play a role in the study by generating and analysing information so as to foster change in the programme by helping to incorporate new learning.

The two EI study locations chosen were Puno state and Villa El Salvador. Puno was selected since the programme had begun there more than 30 years before. Villa El Salvador, a poor municipality in metropolitan Lima, offered a socio-cultural contrast to highland Puno. The EI multidisciplinary staff and two external advisors were hired locally.

The beneficiary population in Puno and Villa El Salvador included 55 coordinators (the salaried professional Pronoei teachers who act as programme supervisors), 55 animadores (the local volunteers who implement the programme on a day-to-day basis), 120 heads of household and 12,000 children. The children were to be encouraged to participate in the study through the use of stories, puppets and visual aids. Sumbi's experience in research projects in which children participate rendered this an attractive opportunity.

Tools

In looking at 'effectiveness', the EI team proposed to focus on programme interventions that had been undertaken in a particular setting and had a positive impact that was tangible according to stakeholders. The aim was to allow the stakeholders to identify the processes they considered useful within the programme as it had been implemented. In other words, the exploration was to proceed not from a set of abstract criteria about 'best practice' towards an assessment of the programme. Instead, it was to proceed from detailed, subjective appraisals of the programme by the stakeholders towards more general 'descriptive topics', 'knowledge', or 'lessons learned' that could be transferred in a straightforward manner and adapted in other, similar project contexts. The goal was to identify the best practices that had emerged in a particular case rather than to evaluate that particular case according to a presumed set of best practices. The approach was analytical, not critical. The emphasis was on learning from, not judging the accomplishments of the programme.

The tools that the team deployed to achieve this end therefore had to be interactive in order to capture the opinions of the various stakeholders. Moreover, the direct participation of the stakeholders in the investigation was deemed additionally important because it would supply a space for reflection and dialogue that could be 'empowering'. In such a space, conflicting

8 See <*www.sumbi.org.pe*>.

priorities and points of tension might also become visible and be recognised, addressed and resolved.

The tools had to be sufficiently flexible so as to generate opinions that could be gathered together, analysed and synthesised in a comprehensible way. To go some way in guaranteeing that the views of the stakeholders were not misinterpreted or manipulated during the translation from experiences into concepts, it was felt that the stakeholders ought to take part in the analytical process as well.

This raised another consideration. Especially in Puno, some of the animadores and coordinators were native speakers of Aymara and Quechua. Their fluency was limited in Spanish, which they used only as a second language. This would be a substantial barrier in their verbal and written communications with other stakeholders and the EI team. For this reason, but also as a means of cross-checking, it was decided that there had to be a wide variety of tools and that some of the tools should depend on visualisation and other non-verbal mechanisms.

The following are the tools that were developed to implement the EI study methodology so portrayed.

- *Questions to the founders.* To build a channel of communication between the Puno programme's founders (who were all animadores or coordinators) and other coordinators, the EI team provided a space in which the latter could formulate questions to the founders. The questions could cover any aspect of the programme, including features perceived as positive or negative. The questions were organised by the EI team and delivered to the founders for their examination and possible response. This exchange encouraged an active dialogue between veterans and the relative newcomers.
- *Staff interviews.* Interviews were carried out among groups in Puno and Villa El Salvador so as to reconstruct the programme's history from the point of view of the Pronoei staff. The groups consisted of programme founders in Puno (who were all animadores or coordinators) and of veteran coordinators in Villa El Salvador whose experience of the programme had been lengthy.

  In order to gather the information sought, the interviews were conducted according to guidelines, and the questions were posed in a fixed sequence. However, the participants were encouraged to answer as they saw fit. Their enthusiasm and their eagerness to talk about the programme were evident, and, in general, the information flowed freely. The interviews were rich in personal narratives and other descriptive elements, and the participants each emphasised features of the programme's history and organisation that interested them personally. The interviews thus produced an array of information on the programme's past, its strengths and limitations and its goals that was less structured and more wide-ranging than an observer who was familiar only with the questions might have supposed.

  Afterwards, along with the EI team, each group analysed the content of the interviews to determine common elements regarding the programme and to plumb the participants' impressions of the reactions to the programme of other staff, parents and children.

  Interviews were also conducted individually in both locations among animadores, founders, veteran coordinators and other leading stakeholders. These interviews were more structured, though the interviewees could talk as much as they wished.
- *The river analogy.* During an activity known as 'river dynamics' or the 'analogy of the river', Pronoei animadores and coordinators in Puno and Villa El Salvador were asked to

make drawings depicting the programme as though it were a river. They were to show the programme's problems and successes from the beginning of their experience until the present as though they were obstacles along the course of the river or places where the river flowed tranquilly, and they were to tag these features for identification. The diversity of drawings that the technique produced was striking, and, during the subsequent discussion with programme founders (all Puno animadores or coordinators) and the EI team, they allowed a great deal of space for the visualisation and open-ended exploration of stakeholder perceptions of the programme's history and evolution.

- *The anecdote.* Groups of approximately 15 Pronoei animadores and coordinators in Puno and Villa El Salvador, the two study sites, were each asked to recall situations that highlighted aspects of the programme they felt had been 'effective'. (Alternative terms were also employed, such as 'useful', 'important' and 'relevant'.) Each group member was then invited to describe on paper one such situation. When the group had finished this activity, the team selected elements within the descriptions for further analysis. At least one entire 'anecdote' was photocopied and handed around the group, which was asked to study it. The group was subsequently requested to identify aspects with which they agreed or disagreed or which they considered the most or the least significant. Later, the story was examined by the assembled group, together with the EI team.
- *Participatory workshops.* A series of workshops was organised with parents, other family members, community representatives, animadores and coordinators so that the EI team could explore the views of the parents regarding the programme and their participation in the programme.
- *Parent interviews.* Interviews were carried out by the EI team among parents in Puno and Villa El Salvador so as to gain a perspective on the views of parents about the animadores and coordinators and about the successes and failures of the programme. The results of the interviews were discussed among the parents, animadores, coordinators and the EI team.
- *Storytelling.* Parents and animadores were each asked to create a story on a main topic, for example a day at a Pronoei centre or a day in the life of a Pronoei child. The stories were then discussed among the parents, animadores and the EI team.
- *The analysis of photographs.* Parents and animadores were given photographs or slides showing children in various situations. They were asked to analyse the situations according to two questions: 'What do I see?' and 'What do I think?' and then to classify the situations as positive or negative in terms of the children. Their analyses and classifications were then discussed along with the EI team.
- *'Balloon cards'.* Children were asked questions by animadores and parents. The animadores and parents wrote each child's response on a card shaped like a toy balloon. On the other side of the card, they would then write their impression of the meaning of the child's response. For purposes of the subsequent discussion and analysis with the EI team, the balloon cards were arranged according to topic.

COURTESY OF SUMBI

Drawing a river

COURTESY OF SUMBI

Animadora and child work on an arpillera

- *The arpillera.* 'Arpillera' is the Spanish word indicating a vivid picture constructed by attaching cut-outs of various colours onto a support. The arpilleras are produced in many parts of Latin America. Each of the arpilleras used in the EI consisted of a foundation of cardboard or strong, course fabric and cardboard or cloth cut-outs representing the landscape and the buildings of the particular community selected for the exploration, as well as the children, parents, animadores and other individuals who had a role in the local Pronoei.

  The Pronoei coordinators in Puno and Villa El Salvador participated in a training workshop at which they received instruction manuals and an explanation of the objectives of the use of the arpillera as an innovative EI tool. Subsequently, the Pronoei 3-to-6-year-olds were taught a game revolving around the placement, identification and description of the various elements in the arpillera. During the game, they were questioned by a coordinator about their habits and routines, their tastes and preferences, their learning in school, their playtime and so on. The questions had been fixed beforehand, and they all related directly or indirectly to the arpillera and to the programme.

  The arpillera pictures and figures proved invaluable as an aid in encouraging the children to express themselves openly and clearly. These children's 'voices' were recorded by the coordinators and then organised by the EI team. During a subsequent workshop, they were presented again to the coordinators, who helped the team analyse their possible implications in terms of the perceptions of the children about the Pronoei programme.
- *Observation.* An on-going activity of the EI team was observation of the day-to-day functioning of the Pronoei centres and the routine activities of the stakeholders. The team members would note any significant impressions that arose during this activity and discuss them at appropriate moments with the stakeholders. These discussions served to confute the impressions or to confirm and build upon them.

- *Community fairs.* As an additional means to verify the accuracy of the analyses of the views of the stakeholders and given the language and literacy barriers in the Aymara- and Quechua-speaking villages, some of the results were presented in a lively, interactive manner during community fairs that were organised so as to guarantee a large turn-out and offer an environment conducive to unprompted, open discussion. The fairs generated fresh results in their own right.

The EI Tools in Puno and Villa El Salvador

Tool	Source of Information	Other Participants: Analytical Discussion
Questions to the founders	founders	coordinators, EI team as intermediaries
Staff interviews	founders, animadores, coordinators, other leading stakeholders	EI team as interviewers
River analogy	animadores, coordinators	founders, EI team
Anecdotes	animadores, coordinators	EI team
Participatory workshops	parents, other family members, community representatives, animadores, coordinators	EI team
Parental interviews	parents	animadores, coordinators, EI team as interviewers
Storytelling	parents, animadores	EI team
Photo analysis	parents, animadores	EI team as creators of the photos
Balloon cards	children, parents, animadores	EI team
Arpilleras	children	coordinators, EI team
Observation	EI team	all stakeholders
Community fairs	all community members	EI team as recorders of the responses

Selected Results of the EI

Insights into the history of the Pronoei

Many successful programmes devoted to the care and development of children are undertaken following a careful diagnosis of the situation of the children in the community where the programme is to be executed. The needs of the children are identified; the general outlines of the programme are discussed with the community, and the interventions are deliberately designed to eliminate specific risks and solve particular problems that affect the children in the community.

The history of the Pronoei shows a different course. The early goal was to offer nutrition education to mothers in poor Aymara- and Quechua-speaking communities in highland Puno. Then the goal became oriented towards helping women by providing mothers with the opportunity to receive training in arts and crafts so as to raise the incomes of their households and improve the social and economic standing of the women within their communities. The

care of children was initially identified as a principal need solely to the extent that it allowed the mothers the space and the time in which to expand their horizons. Only gradually, as the programme was restructured to achieve this goal, did the focus on children begin to take precedence and become overriding.

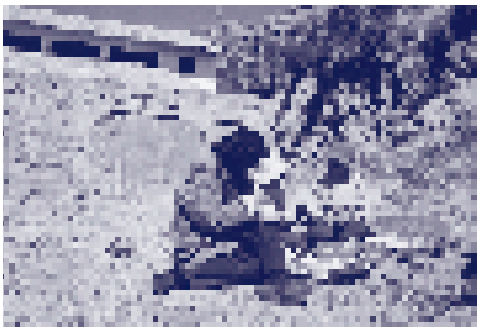
This spontaneity at the beginning influenced the evolution of the programme. As the adjustments were made, new challenges appeared in the implementation of the programme, and the Pronoei animadores and coordinators were obliged to engineer additional changes. Thus, without adopting this as a conscious strategy, the Pronoei staff were 'learning by doing'. In many ways, this spontaneity favoured a flexibility within the Pronoei approach that, in the attempt to realise theoretically appropriate concepts, many other programmes seek, but often do not find. This development through spontaneity was very attractive for the EI study because the approach was in no sense artificial or imposed. It was as though the Pronoei programme was stumbling on to functional, potentially very effective solutions.

A few critical issues and points of tension

A few of the critical issues and points of tension raised among the various stakeholders during the enquiry are as follows.

- The animadores and coordinators wish to receive more training in social work in order to be able to satisfy the full range of the needs of their communities. There is no consistency between the training the animadores and coordinators have received and the roles the parents expect them to play in the programme and in the communities.
- Strengthening the role of the animadores and coordinators in Puno might contribute to the health of the programme since the animadores and coordinators are important mediators between the dominant Spanish-speaking culture and the local Aymara- and Quechua-speaking minorities.
- The positive attitude of the animadores and coordinators plays an important role in the success of the programme. Nonetheless, even when the parents view the Pronoei as a valid alternative to other available pre-schools, the animadores and coordinators tend to see the programme as the sole alternative rather than as the most desirable alternative for low-income families.
- The animadores and coordinators value the appreciation of the parents and the communities highly and need to feel this appreciation in a direct manner.
- The participation of parents in the programme has been limited. Various stakeholders believe parents must participate more if the programme is to be effective. They say parents should identify with the programme and possess a sense of ownership and meaning within the programme. However, some stakeholders think parents should be involved in the maintenance of the Pronoei centres, but that the centres should not be open for other community activities among parents. In general, the perception of parental participation is more positive in Villa El Salvador than it is in Puno. In Puno, the coordinators tend to consider the parents lazy and unengaged.
- For many parents, the process involved in the selection of the coordinators is a mystery.
- The communication is poor among the people at various levels of the programme. There should be a more accurate clarification of roles.

The views of animadores and coordinators on effectiveness



COURTESY OF SUMBI

Playing together

The programme elements the animadores and coordinators consider important in terms of programme effectiveness were revealed through an examination of the anecdotes.

In general, both the animadores and the coordinators believe that the success of the programme is mainly due to the efforts of the animadores. In part, this may be due to the fact that the anecdote tool relied on individuals to describe concrete situations in which they had been directly involved. The testimony obtained therefore appears to highlight the contribution of the individuals who related the anecdotes.

The animadores and coordinators consider a programme effective if it achieves its goals in education, if it is appropriate to the situation and provides support to parents, if its costs are kept low and if it is sustainable.

The animadores and coordinators say that, in order for a programme to be effective, the staff must be properly trained and there must be good coordination among the staff involved in the various programme initiatives. In particular, the animadores, who are the staff members in charge of the boys and girls, must know each child, must be able to show affection easily and should avoid comparisons between children. The best animadores are supportive, patient and persistent. They accept challenges and embrace adventure. They enjoy and are proud of their work. They know the parents and are able to discuss issues with them. For the programme to be effective, the animadores must understand the problems and needs of the families and be able to seek the cooperation of the parents.

Meanwhile, the coordinators should be able to offer support, become involved in problem-solving and be persistent in seeking to achieve the educational objectives. They should be able to plan their work and establish their goals. They must be flexible and know how to cooperate within teams. They must also provide support to and guide the animadores, helping them to overcome any difficulties they may face.

Both the animadores and the coordinators mention the support the parents and the community give the animadores so they can fulfil their roles. The animadores emphasise the importance of their relationship with the parents and the community. They point to the satisfaction the parents feel when they see their children learning and interacting well with other boys and girls. For animadores and coordinators, if the parents identify with the programme, then it will be effective.

In the case of the Pronoei, the animadores and the coordinators say the parents are viewed as important agents of the programme. The parents participate in the activities, attend meetings and appreciate the work of the animadores. As a result of the programme, parents have become more interested in the education of their children. They play a more effective role as teachers, too, by instilling good values among the boys and girls and showing them love. Nonetheless, many current coordinators who see the programme as a tool to improve the behaviour of children tend to consider the input of parents in the success of the programme as less important.

COUTRTESY OF SUMBI

Puno parents in a workshop

Animadores say that the programme is effective when children learn their lessons and are successful in adapting their behaviour to the challenges with which they are presented. The coordinators say the programme is effective if children attend classes, exhibit a positive outlook, can express their happiness, are safe and outgoing, and participate and prepare properly for school.

The animadores and coordinators indicate that the programme centre should be welcoming to the boys and girls and become like a second home. The coordinators consider a programme effective if the number of boys and girls actively participating in the programme is higher than the number of children attending classes. They also say that the rights of the children must be respected at the centres, that programme activities should respond to the interests of the children and that children should learn, but also receive love and affection.

The animadores and coordinators expressed generally positive impressions of the effect of the programme on the children and on the development of the children. They say that the quality of the material and the human resources available to a programme is significant in the outcome of the programme. However, the animadores say that, if there were more programme resources, they would be able to be more effective. To make up for this perceived shortage, some animadores have been organising among parents so as to obtain more resources.

The views of parents on education and effectiveness

The application of the tools permitted a preliminary understanding of the views of the parents on education and programme effectiveness.

Many parents and other community members believe the animadores should be from the communities in which they work. They think this would ensure that the animadores are in

tune with the traditions of the communities and recognise the needs of the communities. Others would prefer that the animadores come from outside the communities because, they say, this would guarantee that the quality of the work is high. They thus appear to assume that people from elsewhere are more qualified.

For the parents, a good teacher teaches, cares and facilitates. Teaching involves giving assignments and recommendations to children and sometimes to the parents as well, imparting training in orderliness, cleanliness, hygiene and nutrition and helping in socialisation among the children.

Some parents said they would like their children to learn more of the material taught in formal pre-schools, especially more of the 'three R's', reading, writing and arithmetic. They said that this was the greatest drawback of the Pronoei.

The parents in Puno felt that the maintenance of the native languages, Aymara and Quechua, is essential for the socialisation of the children. However, they believe instruction must also be provided in Spanish because this is the dominant language in Peru, and Spanish is necessary for success in the formal education system and for communication with people outside the highland communities, for example if one travels or relocates elsewhere in the country. Bilingual education is also valued as a means of enhancing the mental development and intellectual horizons of the children.

In Villa El Salvador, the parents emphasise three factors in the Pronoei pre-schools that, they believe, favour a good education for their children. They regard the Pronoei pre-schools as a superior alternative relative to the other available pre-schools, including the formal ones; they consider the Pronoei pre-schools a good vehicle for the preparation of their children for primary school, and they think the Pronoei pre-schools supply a solid foundation so that their children will enjoy better lives. To a lesser extent, some parents value the Pronoei as an instrument for community management rather than as an educational facility for young children.

The opinions of the children participating in the programme

The opinions of 26 boys and girls in 15 Pronoei centres in Puno were gathered through their participation in games involving the arpilleras. During the interviews based on the arpilleras, the children could respond to questions about the Pronoei in numerous ways, including a simple 'yes' or 'no', longer answers, or questions of their own.

It was to be expected that the children would not express opinions about the relative quality of the care at the centres or the effect of this care on their future education, development, health and well-being. However, they were quite forthcoming on issues such as how much they appreciated the opportunities the centres offered them to play, receive affection, be fussed over and be with their friends. They were enthusiastic about many of the subjects they were learning. Some of the children said the centres represented a place of safety from violence in the household.

Children also supplied information about the centre routines, their relationships with the animadores and the relationship between the animadores and the parents. All the children who responded to the question said that they liked going to the centres. The reasons they gave varied: because they travelled there over Lake Titicaca by boat, because they could write, play, study, draw, read, sing. 'Because I do' some answered simply. Others were a little more precise: 'because I feel good there', 'because it's fun', 'because I'm happy there'.

It was discovered during the interviews that 53% of the children go alone to the centres,

while 27% go with a sibling. This means that most of the children go to the centres unaccompanied by an adult. Although many of the children live within a short walking distance to the centres, this does represent a risk given the presence of dogs, the rocky paths to the centres, the ravines, the sometimes rushing streams. Some of the animadores and coordinators mentioned that there had been cases of tchildren bitten by dogs or falling and hurting themselves.

COURTESY OF SUMBI

Having fun at a fair

An Example of the EI Enquiry in Puno

In April 2000, an EI team completed an investigation in four highland communities in Puno. The team had been working closely with the communities and the local Pronoei animadores and coordinators during the investigation. It had been seeking information especially on the accumulated experience of the communities with the Pronoei animadores and coordinators and on the effectiveness of the Pronoei staff in the view of parents and families. This investigation was an integral part of the EI effort. The following analysis highlights the nature of this effort.

Two Aymara-speaking and two Quechua-speaking communities were selected for the investigation. A team of specialists ran a workshop with parents in each community to gather information about various aspects of the programme. The specialists also employed other EI tools to sample the opinions of the families about the Pronoei and the education of their children and their perspectives on the future. More specifically, the team explored the answers to three questions through their investigation:

- What are the objectives of the Pronoei programme as the families understand them?
- According to the families, what should be the profile and the role of the Pronoei staff?
- How have the perceptions of the families about the programme and the animadores and coordinators influenced the effectiveness of the Pronoei centres?

Outcome 1: The objectives of the Pronoei programme

> *'Children who don't go [to the Pronoei centres] don't know what day it is [and] always play alone. They barely mix with other people because they are like little savages or animals. . . . [T]hey're afraid of people.'*
>
> – A parent in Puno

The EI team assembled descriptive words and short phrases from the answers to the first question asked of the families, 'What are the objectives of the Pronoei programme as you understand them?'. These revolved mainly around two 'topics': the Pronoei as an early education programme for children and the Pronoei as a social programme offering organised care and education for young children. These topics tended to merge into a single concept of the Pronoei programme among the families: 'The Pronoei are centres in which children learn'.

The idea that education is a means to achieve social and economic progress is deeply

COURTESY OF SUMBI

A child who does not participate?

engrained among rural populations in Peru. Thus, it is no surprise that, during the investigation, descriptive words such as 'education', 'progress', 'development' and 'the future' were associated with the Pronoei by families, which also frequently compared the Pronoei with more formal educational approaches. The people in Puno tended to consider education as the start of a road that, ideally, will lead to self-improvement and allow them to leave the communities and cultures into which they were born and become part of the wider Peruvian society and national culture. They equate education and progress.

For the parents, the role of the Pronoei in the motor-cognitive development of their children (typically much more a function of formal education) and the role of the Pronoei in the social development of their children are intertwined inextricably. To learn motor-cognitive skills within the context of an educational system, children must attend some sort of school or educative centre, and this necessarily goes hand in hand with separation from the family, close contact with other children and supervision by strangers who are adults. This implies a great deal of socialisation. In the Pronoei centres, the children begin the process of adapting to the educational system, but they also have their first regular exchanges with strangers.

Moreover, the advantages that the parents perceive in the Pronoei programme are not solely educational or social. They also involve a more general preparation for life. Fluency in the Spanish language, for example, is a necessary tool for formal schooling, but it is also important in many social and economic senses. 'Children who are confined to their homes are children who are standing still' is how some parents characterised this phenomenon.

Using drawings they had produced and storytelling about days in the lives of their children, parents demonstrated ways in which their children benefited from the Pronoei programme. They also indicated what they felt was lost by children who did not participate. Children who did not participate were shown as dirty, unkempt, sad, abandoned. In one case, a child

was represented as an orphan. In contrast, children who participated in the programme were shown to be happy, playing with their companions, clean and tidy, lively and sharp.

> *'It's as if they [non-Pronoei children] are locked up in their homes. But those who attend the Pronoei programme know how to read, identify trees and distinguish colours. . . . They build up their confidence together.'*

> *'In the children's home [the Pronoei centre], they are taught to behave and to interact with others, to become civilised. There, those who are afraid learn to lose their fear. It is as if they were in their own homes, learning to play and talk without fear.'*

> *'They know their companions and where they can safely go together. Those who don't attend the programme only walk their dogs and only know [how to speak] Quechua. They also fear people and animals [and] don't mix easily with others. When they get to school, they don't know how to hold a pencil, how to write; [they] don't understand the teacher.'*

Although the Pronoei is nominally an early years education programme, parents also consider the centres as places where their children can receive care each day. Parents who think that the formal education system is inadequate, perhaps because they themselves began their own (limited) education when they were already older, ask if older children can also take part in the programme.

> *'It's good for those who do go. They have a good time. . . . But what about the children who are always on the street, with nowhere to play? Suddenly, their parents want to take them all to the plaza [where the centre is located] and leave them there because it's not so dangerous.'*

Outcome 2: Expectations about the role of the Pronoei staff

Through storytelling, the parents formulated their perceptions about a typical day in the Pronoei centres and about centre resources. From this information, it was possible for the EI team to discover what the parents felt about the Pronoei staff.

According to the parents, the principal function of the animadores is to teach the children and help them learn. For the parents, the most important school subject is writing. Reading and learning proper pronunciation and fluency in Spanish were also mentioned. Some parents felt their children should graduate and obtain a school certificate.

To carry out their teaching function, the animadores must be friends with the children, though they should not allow themselves to become so close that they lose the ability to maintain control and discipline. They must be able to uphold order, while keeping the children happy.

The parents discussed additional functions of the animadores that are unrelated to education. Many might be classified under the heading 'routine care'. They are tasks mothers typically perform among their children. They include general care, making sure the children are fed properly, toilet training, teaching the children their names and the names of other children by repeatedly addressing each person by name, and assisting the children in understanding their relationship or kinship to others. The parents also expect the animadores to advise them about the best care practices. However, the parents especially hope that the

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Niños de Puno

animadores can help the children overcome the fear of being away from their parents. This means that the animadores should support the children as they adapt to the unfamiliar school environment, meet new people and deal with new rules.

The parents expect the animadores to establish good relationships with the public, including the parents themselves. The animadores have responsibility for the condition of the centre buildings. This means they must implement regular building inspections, maintenance and repair. Parents expect the animadores to hold meetings with them to discuss the related issues, as well as for the organisation of schedules for the participation of parents in building maintenance and other routine centre activities, including games. In two of the communities, the animadores had designed at least half the games themselves.

The animadores are responsible for attracting new enrolments in the programme. When centres close, it is usually because there have been insufficient enrolments to sustain them. When this has happened, parents often say it is because the animadores have lacked adequate interest. The parents think it is the job of the animadores to motivate the communities to support the Pronoei.

> *'She has to motivate the community so as to ensure that the building is maintained. That will help us respect her as a good animadora. . . . She must guide the activities along and gain the respect of the community. If she does this, we, the parents, will commit ourselves to working with her for years.'*

Some parents felt that animadores showed a proper sense of responsibility if they were on time for work, if they always prepared their work beforehand, or if they remained at work from the moment the centre opens until it closes. Other parents expected more. They thought

the animadores should collect the children from their homes in the morning and bring them back to their homes at the end of the day, or, if the parents have not yet returned home, the animadores should take the children to their own homes until the parents can come by and pick them up.

In response to a question about the profile of an ideal 'animador', a small group of parents said they wanted the animadores to come from outside the communities because they would then certainly be more well prepared. However, the great majority wanted the animadores to come from within the communities. Among the various major reasons they gave were that good communications between the animadores and the parents would then be more easily achieved, thereby promoting the greater participation of parents in the programme, that the animadores could then count on better support from the communities, and, above all, that the animadores would then more certainly be individuals willing to support families, especially by accompanying children between their homes and the centres. In addition, the parents said that, if the animadores were from within the communities, they would be more available to cooperate with parents in addressing other community problems and that the communities would be able to exert more control over the work of the animadores. The parents pointed out that local animadores would also be able more readily to put the children at ease in making the transition to the unfamiliar centre environment because the children would know the animadores.

In the four communities examined during this phase of the enquiry, it was clear that, whenever the animadores were outsiders, the communities tended to criticise them for a perceived lack of responsibility, whereas, whenever the animadores were local people, the communities tended to criticise them for perceived shortcomings as educators. While some mothers thought about taking their children out of the programme because of the lack of an adequate sense of responsibility among the animadores who were outsiders, other parents wanted local animadores to become more like the non-locals.

'We want the animadores to teach our children well, and we would like to monitor this and have some control . . . . [S]he wants to teach them all to write neatly and well. But first they should learn to recognise colours, then to write.'

'We could help the animadores [and] give them advice about teaching our children well. If not, our children will not do well when they go to formal school, and this will mean that the prestige of her and our community remains low.'

'Teach the bigger ones to write and the small ones to play.'

Outcome 3: The impact of the perceptions of parents on programme effectiveness

The parents in the four communities in Puno who were consulted during this phase of the enquiry believe that the animadores and coordinators have two main roles within the programme: one that is oriented towards the preparation of the children for the formal education system and the other oriented towards the socialisation of the children, including an awareness among the children of the importance of the years they have spent growing up in a traditional community.

At first sight, these two roles do not appear to be in conflict. Indeed, they seem to complement each other. However, problems arise in practice. In trying to guarantee the one,

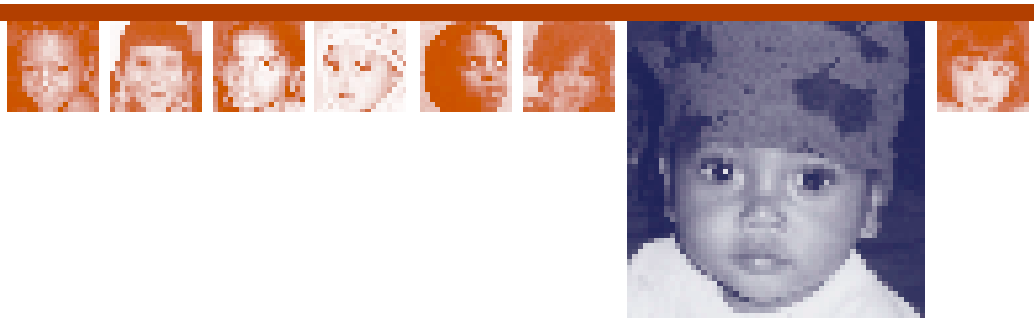
the animadores and coordinators may jeopardise the other.

In the eyes of the parents, animadores who come from outside the community may be more well prepared as education specialists, but may be less suited in that they may not satisfy the expectations of the community in areas not directly related to education, such as meeting the desire expressed by the parents that they collect the children from home and look after the children in the absence of the parents. Meanwhile, local animadores may be able to ensure that the programme operates well in most areas unrelated to education, but may not be able to educate the children properly because of inadequacies in the training provided by the Ministry of Education. This is not so much an inevitable theoretical conflict as a simple reality in these communities because the local animadores tend not to be adequately trained.

Additional Considerations beyond the Scope of the EI

Though the Pronoei experience has generally been positive, the EI revealed areas of concern that need to be addressed. Moreover, the EI team became aware of additional issues that had not been covered during the exploration process. Some of these issues are listed hereafter.

- Conflicts between the expectations concerning the roles and functions of the stakeholders and the realities of the programme need to be investigated further and resolved.
- The demand for the services supplied by the Pronoei centres has been increasing markedly among communities in Peru. However, due to budget constraints, the Government has not been able to respond satisfactorily to this demand.
- Expansion and success of the Pronoei programme will likely result in additional stress on the primary school system because of the consequent rise in the number of children entering formal education.
- The desire among the adult population for more training and other interventions designed to improve their level of education and development, including their literacy, is growing. This is partly due to the greater awareness of education and development issues that has been instilled among the population by programmes such as the Pronoei programme.
- Professional teachers are worried that quality will suffer among services provided through a programme such as the Pronoei that relies on untrained volunteers.
- Likewise, the rapid expansion of such a programme is viewed by professional teachers as a possible threat to their jobs.
- The government budget may be unable to assume the rising costs of the Pronoei programme in terms of proper training and support for the animadores and other volunteers, but also in terms of the growing need for equipment and other physical resources, including infrastructure.
- The proliferation of the demands being made by the animadores and other volunteers themselves may become a problem. They are asking that their years of experience and dedication be recognised and rewarded financially and professionally.



7. Some Stories the Aetas will Tell

The Pinatubo Family Education Programme in the Philippines aims at assisting indigenous, poor and mostly illiterate Aeta families that have been displaced by the eruption of Mount Pinatubo, a volcano in central Luzon. The programme includes home-based and centre-based components and a parent education programme in early childhood development. The Effectiveness Initiative explored two major themes in its exploration of the programme: 'families caring for children' and 'communities caring for children'. The EI team in the Philippines was unusual in that it was composed only of 'insiders': people who were closely involved in the programme or in the organisation running the programme.[1]

The Origin of the Aeta People and the Eruption of Pinatubo

> *'I felt like it was the end of the world. I couldn't see the sky. It was covered by thick black smoke, making it look like it was suddenly night-time. Then, when we started running away, it wasn't rain falling, but sand and ashes. It really felt like the earth would suddenly cave in. Other mothers with me were all crying . . . .'*
>
> – Anita, from Kayanga

Specialists debate precisely when and how the Aetas migrated to the Philippines.[2] Many believe the original settlers used a land bridge to cross from the island of Borneo between 20,000 and 30,000 years ago and that, around 5,000 years ago, water covered the land bridge, leaving a remnant in the Philippines, the island of Palawan.

Whatever the migration path was, the Aetas were among the first, if not the first inhabitants of the Philippines. They were hunter-gatherers. In many cases, they still use bow and arrow to hunt food and are among the most skilled anywhere on earth in jungle survival, but they have learned to use the slash-and-burn method to clear land and cultivate a variety of crops such as rice, corn, bananas, sugar cane, beans, root crops, tapioca and tobacco. Of the produce, only the surplus is sold for cash or used as barter with neighbours. Aeta men who know how to plough hire themselves out to local farm owners.

In earlier times, these typically small-framed, dark-skinned and curly-haired people with black eyes lived throughout the islands. More recently, their traditional homes have been remote highland areas of Luzon, Mindanao, Negros, Palawan and Panay.

One area of the country where the Aetas have lived for thousands of years is Mount Pinatubo, in central Luzon. The volcano had been dormant for about 500 years. In mid-June 1991, it erupted. Except for one

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Settling down to eat

1 The core of this summary is based on de los Angeles-Bautista et al. (2002). See also de los Angeles-Bautista (2001).

2 See The Peoples of The World Foundation (2003).

in Katmai, Alaska, in 1912, the eruption was the worst in the 20th century. The mountain, which had been almost 1,750 metres high before the eruption, was only about 1,500 metres high afterwards. A giant ash cloud rose 35 kilometres, and 17 megatons of sulphur dioxide were injected into the stratosphere. Two to four cubic kilometres of magma, ash and other volcanic debris seared the countryside, filling natural drainage ravines and thereby causing widespread flooding during a typhoon that coincided with the eruption.

Between 700 and 900 individuals died, more than 300 as a result of collapsed rooftops. A more serious disaster was averted by timely, accurate warnings. Philippine authorities were able to evacuate 60,000 people from the villages and farms on the gentle slopes and broad valleys surrounding the volcano.

Nonetheless, the eruption was devastating to the local population. Almost one million people were displaced, and about a quarter million people lost their homes, including around 10,000 Aeta families. Many of these Aetas were resettled in urban areas of Luzon, and a large number will probably never return to their former dwellings. The fertile farmland of the Aetas was ruined, and more than half their livestock perished.

Some of the Aetas were evacuated to two shelter areas supplied by the Government in the neighbourhood of Mount Pinatubo, each respectively about ten kilometres from the ancestral lands of these people. For the families who resettled in Kalangitan, in Tarlac province, on the eastern side of Pinatubo, starting a new life in a barren mountain site meant building homes and villages from the ground up. The families who resettled in Loob-Bunga, in Zambales province, on the south-western side of the volcano, had to adjust to life with strangers in existing villages. In both cases, the poor sanitary conditions and the lack of protection from ash fallout led to many post-eruption deaths. Around 150 Aeta children died in the resettlement areas. Most of the fatalities were due to bronchopneumonia, gastrointestinal diseases, measles and a host of respiratory ailments and other disorders.

The Founding of the Pinatubo Family Education Programme

> *'There were too many people and too few toilets. So it really smelled bad all over. It was dirty. I think that's why the children started to get sick.'*
>
> – Heidi, from Baretto

> *'When our husbands went back after the eruption, they thought they were lost. They didn't realise they were already standing in our village, Moraza. Everything was buried in* lahars *[a mud-stream of water and volcanic ash].'*
>
> – Roselyn, from Mayamban

The Pinatubo Family Education Programme was initiated in 1992, the year following the eruption, to support more than 1,000 Aeta families in the resettlement areas in Kalangitan and Loob-Bunga. Deutsche Welthungerhilfe (German Agro Action, DWHH), which was funding massive relief and rehabilitation efforts by the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement, had sought a local partner to develop a children's programme. It had accepted the proposal of the Community of Learners Foundation (COLF), a non-governmental organisation. COLF then undertook an assessment of the needs of the displaced Pinatubo Aeta families.

The programme was initially guaranteed only one year of funding. In the approach it adopted in the recruitment of programme personnel, COLF thus had to take the possibility into account that it might be simply a temporary partner. Moreover, although it was

anticipated that many health and social problems would have to be addressed on a routine basis among the children and the parents in the settlements, early childhood development specialists who were willing to work in remote communities full time were not forthcoming. COLF therefore recruited 12 nurses and social workers and trained them as community and child development workers at the COLF School for Children in Quezon City, Metro Manila, and other COLF projects among poor communities. These people committed themselves valiantly to making the long, rough trip every week back and forth between Manila and the mountain settlements.

Viewing itself strictly as a facilitator, COLF planned for the eventual withdrawal of the personnel based in Manila in favour of local programme staff. Hence, it took steps to encourage parents in the settlements to work as volunteers. Should the COLF participation cease after a year, at least these parents would have had experience in the programme.

COLF was not obliged to go to substantial effort to gain volunteers within the settlements, however. From the very first months, parents came forward to help out with the programme. Often, this engagement would begin with a parent assisting with feeding the children, then playing with them or constructing teaching aids or toys. Many parents made themselves available, and there was always someone to take up any slack.

It turned out that, in 1993, the COLF partnership was renewed for three years. COLF then decided to ask selected parents to work with the programme on a more regular basis. From among these, a smaller group of parents would be trained as full-time teachers and child development workers. Provision was made in due course for a monthly honorarium in the programme budget. By the end of the 1990s, all but two of the 24 programme staff were from the settlements, and six of the staff were Aeta parents who had been participating in the programme from the first year and had become teachers and child development workers.

The experience and expertise of COLF in community-based early childhood development represented the most productive and strategic investment COLF could make in the settlements, and the programme proposal to DWHH highlighted this potential. From the outset, therefore, the programme was clearly focused on early childhood development activities.

During the first year, the Pinatubo Family Education Programme consisted of two components. The centre-based component was run in the morning among children 3 to 5 or 6 years old in an existing public structure in Tarlac and in the home of a village captain, or leader, in Zambales. It relied on a play-oriented curriculum and offered supplementary feeding and health services. The home-based component was run in the afternoon. It involved playgroups and development activities aimed at 0-to-6-year-olds, as well as a parent education programme (PEP) in early childhood development. From the start, the PEP was included because the COLF staff were convinced that any project designed exclusively for children would have much less impact and would not be sustainable.

The PEP began very informally. When the playgroups were initiated in the home-based component in June 1992, many parents remained with their children. After the playgroups, the parents would sit with the COLF community staff, who wished to get to know them and to learn about their needs, concerns and interests. Little by little, the parents and the staff felt comfortable together.

It seemed a natural progression when these meetings became more structured. Soon, adult group sessions were being held on the terrace or inside the house hosting the component. The breastfeeding infants stayed with their mothers, while the other children left the playgroups every so often to seek reassurance from their parents.

COLF, FENY DE LOS ANGELES-BAUTISTA

Mapping the community's history

It had been agreed with DWHH that there would be a rigorous evaluation at the end of the first programme year before any discussions on the future would be conducted. This evaluation represented a constructive and useful tool for COLF, which was thereby able to test plans that it was in the process of finalising. The evaluation also helped point the way to additional features that might become viable if more resources were to become available. The challenging situation among the poor, displaced and mostly illiterate Aetas warranted this broader perspective. Thus, in 1993, at the beginning of the second programme year, the focus shifted slightly so as to cover entire families.

In any case, once the parents and the younger children had become regular participants in the programme, it was impossible to exclude the older children. What was intended originally to be playgroups for children up to 5 or 6 years of age quickly became groups for 3-to-15-year-olds. At this stage, initiatives were added to support schooling among the 7-to-15-year-olds and promote the active participation of these children in family health and education interventions in the home-based and centre-based components. In the home-based component, COLF child development workers were each assigned groups of older children to supervise, while the younger children were cared for by parent volunteers, who were trained to supply supplementary feeding, growth monitoring and health services for the 0-to-3-year-olds.

At first, the PEP sessions were attended mostly by mothers. The ages of these women varied from around 16 to about 50. The original plan was to focus on family life and parenting issues and on early childhood development. However, adult literacy was incorporated to accommodate a request by the parents. At this point, more fathers joined in.

'While we waited for planting or harvest time, we made baskets and curtains and earned [money] by selling them. All this helped me because I discovered that I was capable of doing many other things besides gathering banana hearts and [clearing] the field.'

– Edith, a PEP participant

An on-farm livelihoods module coordinated by professionals, including an agriculturist, was also eventually added to the programme, and attention to off-farm livelihoods was integrated into the PEP. Local people's organisations have been registered in the resettlement areas, and cooperatives are being created. Microenterprises have been established. The income is distributed equally among the families, the cooperatives and an early childhood development fund that belongs to the community and is aimed explicitly at the sustainability of early childhood activities.

To mobilise more support for the programme, the families and staff of the COLF School for Children in Metro Manila established regular medical missions for each of the two resettlement areas. This enhanced the health services and built bridges between the families in the COLF School for Children and the programme families. For example, children in the school raised money to buy learning materials and books they could share with Aeta children.

Weaving the Effectiveness Initiative into the COLF Programme

COURTESY OF COLF

Children of Zambales

'It is timely that the Effectiveness Initiative provided a special space for narration and for [the] documentation of the life stories and experiences of the Aeta families who are COLF's partners in the Family Education Programme. In the past two years, the storytelling through . . . activities like the community timeline or the family books [has] had a very different tone. There continues to be a sense of nostalgia as [the families] describe their old homes and their lives before the eruption of Mount Pinatubo. But there [has been] also many indications that the deep sense of loss has been replaced with a sense of hope. These activities were valuable processes; many times [they were] cathartic experiences . . . .'

– de los Angeles-Bautista et al. (2002), page 11

In 1999, COLF, as the executing agency, needed to prepare a new proposal so as to obtain DWHH support to prolong the Pinatubo programme for another phase. The current phase could be either the final phase of the programme or the second to the last one should DWHH approve the proposal. The opportunity to participate in the Effectiveness Initiative occurred within this context.

COLF saw the EI as a perfect occasion to enrich the programme as it was approaching the end of formal external financing from the donor-partner. The EI could very directly facilitate an in-depth assessment that would allow COLF to improve the programme and enhance its impact on the lives of the primary stakeholders. Thus, COLF agreed to participate in the EI, and the planning for the EI commenced in mid-1999.

In 2000, two full-time research personnel were recruited by COLF to support community-based staff in ensuring the integrity and completeness of the narrative documentation for the EI of COLF activities among the Pinatubo programme settlements. The task of the researchers and the staff – the EI team – was to discover, organise and analyse the existing information on programme activities and the impact of the programme on children, families and the communities. They had to examine all the documentation that had been accumulated since the beginning of the programme, including progress reports, financial reports, the minutes of meetings, journals maintained for various purposes, curriculum proposals, staff notes and reports by independent evaluators that had been commissioned by the DWHH. There were also children's records, including growth monitoring charts, health records, children's drawings, and written work and anecdotal records in staff journals.

That there were additional questions and that it was necessary to gather fresh information became clear well before the end of this process. Interactive methods were required so that the EI team could survey the opinions of the Aeta communities about the performance of the Pinatubo programme, their current needs and their hopes and expectations for the future. It was important to ensure that there would be several sources of information that would faithfully reflect the diverse points of view of the stakeholders so as to provide a firm basis for data analysis. Finally, other issues would certainly arise as the EI project progressed, and these would have to be studied so as to obtain a better grasp of the programme's 'effectiveness'.

The task the EI team set itself of weaving its activities into the daily routine of the COLF programme proved to be quite straightforward. To engage the participation of the Pinatubo Aeta families, COLF had already been relying on interactive group-oriented interventions since the start in the early 1990s. These interventions were highly suited to the EI. Thus, the parents had created many of the programme learning materials, and, along with COLF child development workers, had been drawing on games, discussion groups and writing activities adapted from the 'whole language' approach implemented by COLF in educational programmes. They had been organising the analysis of the issues that affected them as caregivers and community members, and they had always been involved in determining the steps – small or giant – necessary to realise their own learning activities and in setting the pace at which the learning took place.

The bulk of the EI work was carried out in the field and at the COLF office in Metro Manila from August 1999 to mid-2002. The information generated through the project began to be retrieved, collated, coded and analysed during 2001. It was possible to cross-reference and validate the data from numerous data sources because, ultimately, the parents and children who were active in the Pinatubo programme figured prominently in all the data sets. The specific views of parents that were expressed during workshops would often find resonance within other project interventions and the responses during interviews and on questionnaires. (Selected EI project interventions are described below.) In any case, there was also a plan consistently to 'triangulate' or validate all the information collected through the EI. This plan was prepared by the EI team during the initial project stages.

The identification of themes

Group brainstorming sessions were held among parents, older children and community staff during the development of the curriculum at the heart of the Pinatubo Family Education Programme. This same procedure was adopted for the EI. The aim of the resulting discussions between the primary stakeholders and the EI team was to identify 'themes'

around which descriptive material could be generated about key aspects of the programme. This material could then be used as a starting point to map the contours of the effectiveness of the programme.

Two major themes emerged: 'families caring for children' and 'communities caring for children'. Words, phrases and visual images that were relevant to each of these themes were produced during the initial brainstorming sessions. A further round of discussions concentrated on the framing of questions about the themes that were likely to elicit responses from the stakeholders. It was hoped that, taken together, these responses would articulate the thoughts of the various stakeholders about the effectiveness of the programme.

An ad hoc COLF tracer exercise

One aspect of the examination of effectiveness involved an enquiry by the EI team on two questions about the influence of the early childhood development programme on children: 'What has been the impact on the school performance of children who were regular participants and who are now in elementary school?' and 'How are these children faring today in terms of their social and emotional well-being within the context of their families, their peers, other community members and their schools?'. Not only could the answers to these questions provide guidelines that could be used to enhance the programme, but the before-and-after picture of the children who participated in the home-based or centre-based components in the early years of the Pinatubo programme and who are now in elementary school could represent a special contribution in the effort to collect a pool of evidence from throughout the world on two similar questions: 'Does the participation of young children in early childhood development programmes have a positive influence on their lives?' and 'If so, how long is this influence likely to endure after their participation has ended?'.

The EI team began to collect and analyse data on these issues. The following sources of information were available: (1) documentation on children's participation in the programme, including home-based or centre-based component attendance records, entries in staff logbooks, developmental assessment checklists, and health records and interviews with COLF staff, (2) open-ended or structured interviews with children and parents about the children's daily lives now, including schooling, current interests, and attitudes towards themselves and their families, schools and communities, (3) observations about the children who are in public schools or who are currently involved in programme interventions for older children and (4) interviews with public school teachers and analysis of school records and of samples of the children's school work.

Communities caring for children: health for all

Health-related issues have posed the greatest challenge for COLF from the start. Because of the Pinatubo eruption and the displacements of the Aeta families, parents had great difficulty addressing the conditions within the community that were fuelling the vicious circle of malnutrition and childhood disease. Health was therefore an obvious focus during the early stages of the programme.

The EI team recognised that, by joining the participatory learning and action process that COLF had already implemented, they could gain insights into the potential of the Pinatubo programme for improving the health of the children. Health-care planning was therefore

undertaken within the structure of the PEP, and tools for participatory learning and action and participatory appraisal were prepared as a means of collective problem-solving and of learning about care-giving among Aeta families and communities.

COURTESY OF COLF

Mother feeding, children playing

A workshop on health was convened at which parents plotted out the incidence of illnesses among family members over a 12-month period. The parents then analysed the data to discover which illnesses affected large numbers of children, why certain illnesses seemed to occur at particular times of the year and which illnesses were serious and required intervention beyond home care. Though much of this sort of information had already been introduced in PEP sessions since the first year of the programme, the reinforcement was considered crucial because the health problems were recurring.

At a subsequent workshop, the parents talked about the causes of the illnesses and drafted curative charts showing the measures to be taken to treat the illnesses. The charts included traditional remedies, the intervention of primary health workers and clinic or hospital visits. The parents then constructed a curative matrix based on evaluations of the treatments to determine which were most effective, which were more convenient and accessible, possible harmful effects, the timing and appropriateness of interventions, and situations in which help should be sought beyond home remedies and the *albulario* ('traditional healer') or village health worker.

Next, local workshops were conducted to elaborate on these and other important matters. During the workshops, the parents talked more about the causes and prevention of many illnesses. One result was the introduction of a 'health fence', which involved the sharing of information about good health practices and agreement on the concrete preventive health measures that needed to be taken to protect family members, particularly children.

Especially at this stage, the COLF staff in the communities felt it would be useful to focus more directly on on-going and emerging needs and offer assistance to individual parents so as to build on the strengths of the group interactions and nurture the support system that exists among the parents.

Learning to read and write their lives: stories of families as caregivers

At the outset of the COLF programme, the Pinatubo parents specifically asked that literacy also be a focus. COLF's view on this request was informed by the many years during which it had been exploring and applying the 'whole language' approach to the education of children in reading, writing and the use of language to communicate. The combination of writers workshops, a literature reading programme and other, more traditional teaching methods, such as the use of phonics, word recognition, decoding and analysis, has always been an exciting adventure for the children and teachers at the COLF School for Children in Quezon City and within COLF projects among communities.

Because the Pinatubo programme was centred on early childhood development, it was natural to locate the literacy effort within the development activities. So, early childhood development provided the conceptual and practical content of the literacy effort and

the motivation for the parents to carry through with it. The approach was thus adopted with the children involved in the Pinatubo programme, but, for the first time, it was also implemented among adults who wanted to learn to read and write alongside their children. The same principles were applied, but now through relaxed storytelling and conversations about families. These informal group dialogues, along with more intimate interpersonal interactions with individual parents, allowed the participants to frame questions, identify problems and analyse the enabling factors, as well as the obstacles, to the provision of 'quality care' for their children. By learning more about their children, the parents become more aware of the social, cultural, economic and political realities that they confront daily.

The reading and writing, combined with the awakening to issues important to the families, produced many opportunities for parents to create their own 'books' about traditional herbal cures, their children's experiences, their immediate environment, their community and their family history. The writing process for these 'family books' consisted of several elements.

The idea of writing books as a means of helping parents educate themselves about child welfare was the subject of a brainstorming session on the EI theme 'families caring for children'. The participants at the session thought that the book-writing project represented an excellent opportunity for the Aeta parents and the older children to become actively involved as researchers in the EI project. If each household were to begin creating a book containing family stories, the parents could also use the writing process to examine other interesting questions, such as: 'What are the things we want to share with others about our own family?' 'Who are we?' 'What do we do?' 'What are our problems?' 'How do we solve them?' 'How do we take care of one another?'. Thus were born the 'family books'.

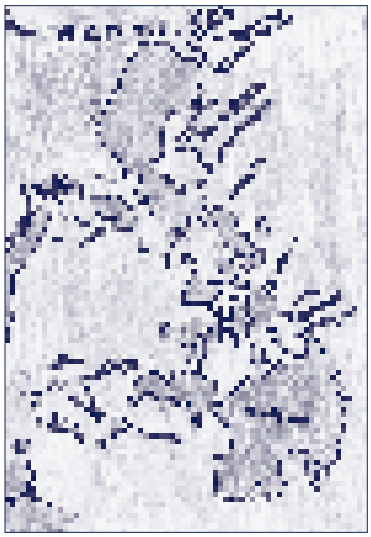
Parents, staff and children began gathering information from many sources, including charts that were introduced within the EI on the time-use of family members and notebooks on family activities. They then organised this material into stories that had meaning in the lives of their families, and they explained the meaning so that the stories would make sense to other community members who might be their readers. As they wrote, they learned about the things that had been important to them as families and as communities, and they learned to write. Then, they reproduced the stories in a neat script and selected accompanying drawings and photographs to illustrate the stories, and so they published the 'books'.

As books were completed, it became clear that the process was yielding very significant insights about the experiences of families, about how the parents cared for their children and each other, about their relationships with the programme and with COLF and about the impact of the programme on their lives.

The Effectiveness of the COLF Programme

> *'My youngest child studies at the COLF centre every morning. I also study through the PEP and help . . . with the children in the playgroup. . . . My children learn a lot, like writing their names, the shapes, numbers and letters. When my husband comes home from work, he plays with our children. . . . At night, before we sleep, we help the older children with their assignments and school projects so they can do well in school. Even if my husband is tired, he manages to make time for our children.'*
>
> – Jane, mother in the Feria family

Has the family been the best possible programme focus?



The situation was discouraging and depressing for the Aetas who were beginning new lives in the resettlement areas shortly after the eruption of Pinatubo. They had to fend for themselves and provide for their own needs in a difficult, unfamiliar environment. Their children were suffering from respiratory illnesses, skin diseases and conjunctivitis, and many were malnourished.

The COLF programme represented for many Aetas, particularly those from more remote and isolated places, the first encounter with development workers who had a certain amount of expertise in child health and welfare. In this context, it was essential for COLF to establish a solid rapport with the Aetas in order to offer them assistance in dealing with the health and care problems they were facing with respect to their children. It is therefore of particular interest to explore whether the COLF assumption that the programme focus should not be on the child alone, but on the parents and the child and, especially, the family, has been confirmed over the years. Is there any evidence of a qualitative difference between the family-focused strategy employed in the programme among the Pinatubo Aetas and the potential of more narrowly focused approaches, such as child-only programmes, or more broadly focused ones, such as a community development methodology based on the establishment of income-generating activities and microcredit and financing schemes?

Given that there has been no COLF child-only or non-family-based community development initiative among the Aetas, no direct comparative evidence is available. However, there is plenty of other sorts of evidence, including the voices of the primary stakeholders recorded during three years of EI enquiry and the more than ten years that COLF staff observed, listened to and interacted with the Aetas as they adjusted to their new homes.

> *'. . . all my children are learning with COLF. I'm also learning, and, even for our livelihood, I can now raise animals at the same time I'm studying. COLF is really for the family.'*
>
> – Gemma Lagmay, a PEP participant

Throughout the years of the Pinatubo programme and then within the context of the EI, whenever Aeta parents have spoken of their child welfare responsibilities and practices, their attitudes and values in relation to child-rearing, or their aspirations for their children, the context in which their descriptions have been couched is the *mitata-anak* ('parents and children' in Sambal, a local dialect). Observations of families at home and of children in playgroups and the family time-use studies and family books show clearly that older siblings – both brothers and sisters – are very much involved in taking care of younger children, and the care of children is part of their daily routine whether or not they are still in school. Their care duties include feeding, supervision, play and helping with homework. Finally, the Aetas always say they have learned how to care for their children and instil discipline and teach values among them from other family members, above all, their own parents, aunts and uncles, and they often say they turn to other family members for support in treating sick children.

In this last case, they are referring to the extended family or *angkan* ('clan') to which they belong. The care and welfare of children certainly seems to be a family affair.

COURTESY OF COLF

Volunteer mothers and grandmothers, Zambales

> *'Cultural anthropologists [have] noted that the family grouping is the basic social element in Aeta society. The family grouping is usually composed of the family of the parents and the families of their married children. As a grouping, they live together and move together; they share food and often eat their meals together; they collaborate in their work and willingly share the products of that work. The families' description of their lives before the eruption is consistent with these observations of cultural anthropologists who have done ethnographic studies on indigenous communities in the Philippines.'*
>
> – de los Angeles-Bautista et al. (2002), page 13

Family groupings are also integral to the social, economic and moral ties within the Aeta communities. Thus, after a year of interaction with the partner families through the livelihoods initiative of the Pinatubo programme, the COLF staff felt it was apparent that the clan or extended family had to be the foundation of any effort to foster community economic activity.

The results of the COLF tracer exercise

> *'After lunch, Marites and her sister Verna sat on the bench under the mango tree. . . . Marites was teaching her older sister to read in English. Her mother said, "Marites is very patient with her sister. I have never heard her raise her voice, and she is always smiling." . . . In the afternoon, after the playgroup, Marites returned home . . . . She went straight to the kitchen to get the water containers. Then she and her sister fetched water. Marites would pump; her sister held the container. They filled up two containers.'*
>
> – COLF staff member, observations at a home in Loob-Bunga

One of the basic questions we can ask in an effort to understand whether a programme has been effective is: 'What is the impact of the programme on the lives of the young children who have participated?'.

Among the Aeta children, access to formal education has been a major difference between life in the old villages and life in the two resettlement areas. Nonetheless, it was obvious from the first year of the programme that the physical proximity of schools does not guarantee that enrolment in school will become equivalent to being able to stay in school. For example, among the 15 children who first attended the centre-based programme in the Kalangitan resettlement area and who then went on to elementary school, only nine graduated, and only seven of these are now in secondary school.[3] The six who did not graduate were pulled from school by their

3 Not including children who migrated out of the resettlement areas, 257 children in Kalangitan and 387 children in Loob-Bunga participated regularly in the home-based or centre-based programmes from the first to the tenth year of the programme (1992 to 2002). The data on these children are still being processed, but it has been fairly easy to establish the current educational status of 90% of the children.

parents so that they could work and help support the family. Two married early.

COLF undertook initiatives to provide support for school-aged children, but more must be done to address the economic problems of families and to allow parents to reflect on their attitudes towards the importance of the work of their children with respect to family income, early marriage among their children and their desire to support their children's formal education.

Many other factors may account for a child's lack of success in school, however. Furthermore, the issue of school access or performance does not entirely reflect the goals or the orientation of the COLF programme, which is aimed at the 'whole child', especially in terms of self-awareness, self-confidence and social adjustment within the family and among peers.

So, it was decided to document the lives now of at least ten children who had been regular participants in the programme in each resettlement area: 20 children altogether. The documentation has been based on observations of the children in school, at home and within the community, on interviews with the children, their parents, their teachers and COLF child development workers and on inspections of school work, school evaluations and early childhood developmental assessment checklists.

Twelve case studies of 8-to-14-year-olds (ages as of 2001) who participated in the programme on a regular basis have been completed. Of the 12 children, six are from the Kalangitan resettlement area (Tarlac), and six from the Loob-Bunga resettlement area (Zambales). Eight are girls, and four are boys. The six Tarlac children attended both the home-based component (when they were under 4 years old) and the centre-based component (when they turned 4). The six Zambales children participated only in the home-based playgroups. (There is no centre-based component in Loob-Bunga.) The participation in the programme was on-going starting in 1992 for the 14-year-olds and in various other years for the rest of the children. Each child participated in the programme for from four to six years. All the children were still participating in other Pinatubo programme initiatives at the time the studies were completed.

All 12 children are enrolled in public schools in the two resettlement areas. Ten are at the appropriate grade level for their age. Ten are described by their teachers as 'above average' as pupils. They are also described as 'quick learners', and their report cards confirm this. Two children (one boy and one girl) are described as 'slow learners' or 'with reading difficulties'. They have low grades, but are not failing. All except two are able to read and write in Filipino as expected for their grade level. Two have much difficulty with reading and writing in English and 'read slowly' in Filipino. The teachers note that the COLF children are much better prepared than other children for school. The Aeta children already know how to write their own names, and most of them were already at least beginning readers when they were enrolled. The teachers also say the children are more self-confident and show respect when talking to older people.

The interviews with the parents revealed that they are very much involved in the daily activities of their children, especially schooling. The parents who are not yet fully literate said that their children ask the COLF teachers for help with their homework or school work. Some of the children often visit the COLF centre to read books, borrow materials, or seek assistance from the staff. The shared routines and activities provide a structure that helps them gain the all-important sense of belonging to a family and a community.

All 12 children, diverse as they are in personality and temperament, are well adjusted socially. They relate well to their peers, some in a quiet, relatively shy way, while others are

very outgoing. The parents and teachers say the children generally behave appropriately and satisfy expectations in school and at home. Most of the children have siblings, with whom they are close. All meet with friends regularly.

An assessment of the parent education programme

> *'Aside from learning to write, I [have come to] understand the real value of children in the family. I learned that loving and caring for my children is not just feeding them, but really understanding them and their needs. For example, we should talk with them always, play with them so they will learn.'*
>
> – Wayda, from Burgos

While the importance of supporting parents has long been acknowledged at the theoretical level in the Philippines, the PEP is one of the few practical attempts in the country to integrate a focus on parents and the family into a community-based early childhood development initiative. Through the EI, it has been possible to document how parents feel about the PEP, their level of participation, what they consider the most important lessons they have learned, and what changes have taken place in their own lives and the lives of their children as a result of their participation.

By the end of its first year, the PEP had already become part of the daily routine for many Pinatubo Aeta families. Participation rates were fairly consistent during subsequent years, though they invariably declined during the planting and harvest seasons. In 2001, there were 287 parents in ten localities in Zambales and 229 parents in eight localities in Tarlac who were regularly attending meetings in the PEP groups that had been organised in the localities.

Through the PEP, mothers have become more conscious of their roles as mothers and caregivers. They have also learned how much they contribute to the incomes of their families or to the resources of other family members. This self-awareness, this positive sense of themselves as individuals has been very significant, and their participation in the PEP has provided them an opportunity to find more space to grow.

Has the participation of parents in the PEP resulted in changes in practices aimed at the care and welfare of children? According to the parents and the COLF staff, the answer is 'yes'. This has emerged in various ways from all the sources of information, including the participatory learning and action workshops, the early childhood development workshops, the family books, interviews, staff logbooks and observations, progress reports and external evaluation reports. (See below, where the PEP is included among the programme initiatives that have been responsible for the changes discussed.)

Aeta views on play: before and after

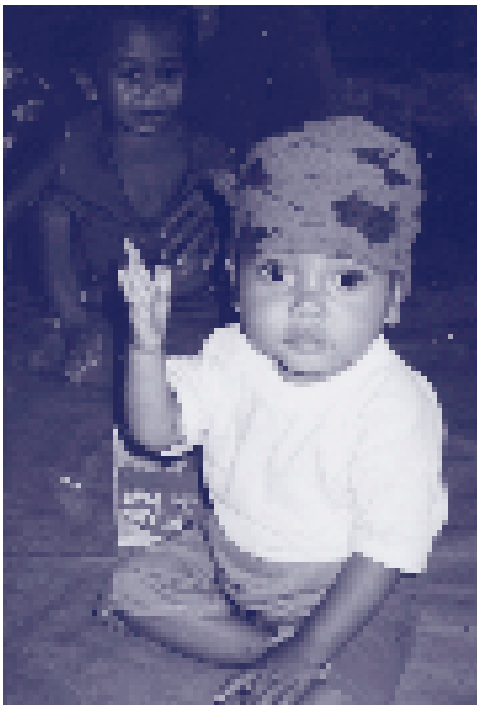
During the first years of the COLF programme, many of the parents said that, in their old villages before the eruption, play interfered with their children's farm work and household chores, and they allowed their children to play together and explore their natural environment only reluctantly.

Within a year of the establishment of the PEP and the playgroups, there was a visible change in the views of parents. Pinatubo Aeta parents now generally understand the importance of play. They have witnessed some of the benefits of play. Through play, children acquire physical and motor skills; their cognitive abilities are enhanced, and they learn to interact with other

children. Play assists in the development of personality and interpersonal skills. Play is a source of healthy enjoyment.

'It was here in Kalangitan that I learned about the other very important aspects of [the care of children], like the value of play for children, of me playing with them, as well as giving them time to play with other children. Before I was very strict and wouldn't allow them to play chasing games or other [games] that would cause them to sweat. I learned from my participation in the PEP that it [is] good for them to play all different kinds of games.'

– Marivic, a mother in the resettlement area in Tarlac



COURTESY OF COLF

Family in Furloc

This has been one of the most prominent changes that has been revealed during the enquiry. Parents say, first of all, that their attitude towards children's play evolved as a result of the programme. This alteration in the outlook of parents has also had an effect on child-focused practices and the interactions of parents with their children. 'I now take the time to play with my children,' was a frequent statement by both mothers and fathers. They appreciate the value of role-playing, of games and of educational toys for their children's development through play. Parents who participate in the home-based component take pride in the toys they have been creating from indigenous, recyclable materials for the use of the children in the playgroups.

Aeta views on education and schooling: before and after

'I'm happy because my mother is always by our side to guide us in our studies. When there are some things we don't understand too well, she explains [them] to us again. Even when she has many things to do, she still makes time for us, to teach us.'

– Eujay, in a family book

Compared to the glaring lack of reference to education in the descriptions parents offered of their old villages, their children's and their own education has become a very important part of their roles as caregivers and as adult learners in their new homes.

The teachers interviewed for the 12 case studies in the COLF tracer exercise (see above) emphasised the shift they noticed in the attitude of parents towards the schooling of their children. Most of the parents are now supportive of education and show interest in the progress of their children in school. They also make sure that their children have enough school supplies and whatever else is required in school.

During the first years of the programme, parents would enrol their children in school,

but did not understand how important it was also to help their children adjust to the needs of education. Among the reasons cited by teachers and the children in explaining the school dropout rates in those early years was the fact that the children did not have school supplies. They were often scolded by their teachers and were embarrassed or even afraid to return to class. To address the situation, COLF solicited donations and provided credit for school supplies through the cooperative stores. While the problem had a lot to do with the poverty of the families, it also had much to do with the attitudes of the parents towards education. The economic well-being of the families has improved over the years, but attitudes have also been modified.

One EI initiative among the Aetas was the 'community timeline' workshops. These workshops focused on eliciting the reflections and memories of the Aetas about stories on their communities, particularly the transformations of these communities before and after the Pinatubo eruption and including the entire period of the COLF programme. As expressed during the workshops, the views of parents on the importance of formal education for their children tended to vary depending on their own experiences. The parents who had not gone to school said they could not really appreciate the relevance of education. Parents whose pre-eruption villages had schools or were near schools considered education important. But, in all these places, only one village had a primary and a secondary school. All the others had schools offering only a few of the first grades. So, many of the children were unable to complete primary school because they had to walk long distances to be able to attend. Safety and health concerns, as well as the difficulty for the children to endure such an exhausting daily routine ten months a year, were major considerations in discontinuing education.

Another common reason for dropping out of school in the old villages was the conflict between farm work and schooling. During the planting and harvesting seasons, all family members were badly needed for work. Especially since the Aetas practised shifting cultivation, they had to try to clear as much land as possible and make the most of each planting cycle. When the value of schooling was weighed against the value to the family of the work of the children, most parents decided in favour of the work.

In the old villages, siblings or elderly family members often took care of very small children, while the rest of the family worked in the fields. However, in the new villages, some women now remain behind to care for the children, while the others join their husbands in the distant communal mountain farms. This change in care practice occurred after the death of a sickly, malnourished 4-year-old girl in Kawayan following an extended stay on a mountain farm. The new villages realised that infants and very young children were extremely vulnerable for many reasons to these long trips, the generally harsher weather conditions, the makeshift shelters and the shortages of nutritious food in the mountain farms. The COLF staff had discussed these problems and also the importance of schooling, but it was not easy to break the longstanding tradition of families that had always moved together. It took the tragedy of the death to push the new villages to try a different approach. Now, the women who are pregnant or breastfeeding usually stay behind with the younger children, and so there are more opportunities for schooling. Indeed, according to the teachers interviewed for the case studies during the COLF tracer exercise, parents are no longer inclined to pull their children out of school to do farm work during the planting or harvesting season.

During the community timeline workshops, parents emphasised the importance of teaching their children to work because it was critical to family survival. They did not talk so much about the children's need for these skills in the future, but mainly referred to them as essential to the Aeta way of life. Work at home and on the farm was integral to the Aeta

COLF, FENY DE LOS ANGELES-BAUTISTA

Tatay Paylot narrates a story of the recent past

child's socialisation and learning experiences. They were taught mainly through their direct participation in these family activities. They learned farming, food gathering and household chores by doing.

Teaching children *mabuting asal* (appropriate behaviour) and positive values was considered an important part of the responsibilities of parents. Parents said they always talked to children about how to treat people and to relate to them, about being helpful and cooperative, about honesty, about respecting their elders and being obedient. Most of them used physical punishment on their children as a way of instilling discipline.

An analysis of all the information on what parents consider 'the most important things for children to learn' showed these same attributes and values still emerging clearly. However, learning to read and write, to speak well and to listen to and communicate with others are now also appearing alongside the excellent older values. Now, when parents talk about the educational opportunities that have been opened up to their children, they never fail to mention the COLF playgroups or the centre-based pre-schools. They have understood the importance of schooling for their children.

Aeta views on health: before and after

> *'Many Aetas are both materially and emotionally insecure. They have not come to terms with their expulsion, and they have problems, albeit latent ones, with the new environment. This insecurity is affecting the children, too.'*
>
> – Ursula Pattberg, independent evaluator, after a 1993 visit to the resettlement areas

During the EI activities and in the documentation, the parents in both resettlement areas continually made reference to the contentment and peace they experienced in the old villages. In the old villages, they could quite easily ensure that their children were well fed and free from disease. They called those times 'abundant' because there was always food from the farms and from hunting and fishing, and the children never went hungry.

They also said their children were generally free from illness except for the occasional cold or cough, which they immediately remedied with plant and herbal cures. All babies were breastfed, sometimes for up to three years. Most of the mothers gave birth with the help of a traditional birth attendant or their husbands. Few villages had health centres, and there was a public hospital only in one village. In any case, there was rarely a doctor, but only a midwife who came once a month and seldom had any medicines. Almost no children were ever immunised. If the health problems were more serious, such as very high fever, some parents turned to family members who could communicate with the spirits through healing rituals. A few parents mentioned that there had been incidents of malaria.

The parents made a distinction between 'not being poor' in the old villages before the eruption and 'being very poor' in the resettlement areas. In the immediate years following the eruption, the Aetas experienced many new and unfamiliar diseases and ailments, such as measles and the lahar 'dust'. Many people were living in tents or half-finished grass and bamboo houses and were prey to the erratic weather – extreme heat and then heavy rains – that made the living conditions so difficult. Parts of the resettlement areas were overcrowded, and respiratory illnesses, conjunctivitis and skin disease spread quickly. The parents continued their traditional healing practices with less success. Food was often in short supply, and children were hungry and became malnourished.

The relief operations were phased out during the second year after the eruption. The government agencies had established public health care, social welfare services and public schools, but they were too far from the larger towns, so the government workers, teachers and health workers did not stay more than a few days at a time in the resettlement areas. The families welcomed the Government's occasional relief distributions or cash-for-work schemes, but these were irregular, too. Some non-governmental organisations distributed farm tools and animals, but the Aetas usually had to sell these to be able to buy food. Other livelihood opportunities were offered, and a few parents became involved in agricultural credit programmes, but there was no lasting impact. Loans were not repaid. Farming activities were not continued.

Though the Pinatubo Aetas had expected life to be difficult after losing their homes and their livelihoods, they never imagined it would be this hard to cope. There was a palpable sense of powerlessness, combined with a culture of dependency that seemed to prevail after almost two years of accepting relief goods. The people were constantly reminded of their failings. They were deeply affected by the harsh realisation that they were incapable not only of providing food for their children and keeping them free of disease, but also of holding their heads high among the 'mixed' people (only part-Aeta) and the *unats* (the 'straight haired', or lowlanders).

> *'Here in Kalangitan, I learned more about taking care of them when they are ill. Here is where I learned to bring them regularly to the health centre. I also had my two youngest children vaccinated. I learned how important completing the vaccination dosage is to prevent diseases.'*
>
> – Marivic, a mother in the Kalangitan resettlement area

This was the situation COLF encountered when it first started working in the resettlement areas. Initially, the COLF staff themselves provided as many of the health care services as they could. Then, the nurses arrived and stayed, and COLF began recruiting nurses to be trained as child development workers who could work with both the parents and the children in anticipation of the many health problems that would have to be addressed. It became common for parents to knock on the doors of the COLF centre even late at night or before dawn to ask for help because of health emergencies. The staff and the nurses assisted mothers in childbirth.

'Once when my aunt's youngest son was sick, I advised her to make a forehead patch with oregano leaves to relieve the fever, but I also told her, if the fever does not go down after a day, she should bring him to the health centre.'

– Lani Manalan, a COLF parent volunteer

Then, the PEP was established. The parents were convinced to allow their children to be immunised. In some cases, they permitted this only because COLF staff had suggested to them that the function of the vaccines that protected their children from diseases such as measles and that were brought to the communities by health services was analogous to the amulets their children were wearing to protect them against evil spirits. Gradually, through the PEP, the parents learned to 'bridge' their traditional healing practices and the public health services. They combined traditional herbal cures and treatments with appropriate medicines prescribed by health workers or doctors. They learned how to prevent disease and care for sick children. They now regularly de-worm their children. They bathe their children daily or at least every other day. They have come to understand the importance of proper nutrition.

A Story the Aetas might Tell

'Aside from learning to take better care of my children, to read and write, I also learned to interact with other people, not just my neighbours, but many other people. . . . I'm no longer shy.'

– Meling, from Dangla

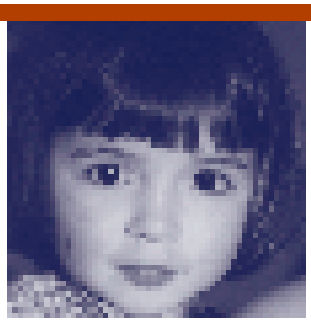
From the perspective of organisational learning, the EI has helped COLF. It has provided insights into the ways in which the approaches and methodologies of the programme have benefited children, parents and programme staff. COLF has also been a good partner for the EI, for it has been a vehicle for a better understanding of the ways in which the quality of the human relationships nurtured within a community can become a key factor in any assessment of the extent to which an organisation or a programme has lived up to its goals of 'living and learning' with the people it has set out to serve.

It might be expected that, after more than a decade of investment in children and parents, the COLF programme would surely have had an impact on the lives of the Pinatubo Aetas. Indeed, such is the case. The children's playgroups, the PEP and the work in the COLF centre and in the homes have become a very important part of the lives of individual children and their families and of parents as adult learners.

There were many times in the first few years in the resettlement areas when the Aetas showed their insecurity in relation to the unats. In losing their homes, they also seemed to lose the sense of confidence they used to have as they cared for their young and cleared and

tilled the land and reaped the fruits of the natural environment they knew so well. Over time, in the process of building their new homes, they have learned to adapt to an unfamiliar environment and are now exploring fresh opportunities. Little by little, they have recovered their confidence.

For the Aetas, the narration of extraordinary events, folktales and personal experiences has a social function as a means of recording and communicating history. In the past couple of years, the storytelling of the Aetas has undergone a change. There continues to be a sense of nostalgia as they describe their old homes and their lives before the eruption of Mount Pinatubo. But there are also many indications that the deep sense of loss has been replaced with a sense of hope. In time, perhaps they will also tell wonderful stories about the transformation of resettlement areas into their own communities.



8. History and the Águeda Movement

The Águeda Movement in Portugal is unique among the programmes involved in the Effectiveness Initiative in that it is a 'movement' with no tightly organised structure or administrative hierarchy. By choice, the EI team in Portugal centred its attention on the documentation of the 30-year history of the movement because an 'institutional memory' and a steady historical record did not exist.[1]

The EI and the Movement

In 1999, visits of experts involved in the Effectiveness Initiative helped the Águeda Movement, in Portugal, understand the EI. This led to the development of a three-year workplan and budget that was submitted to the Bernard van Leer Foundation. An EI team was created. Eight of the ten members were Águeda insiders, while two were EI consultants from the Foundation.

The decision was made to focus the EI on a profound reflection about the movement in the course of the 25 years of its evolution. This would occur through a review of the history of Águeda with the aim of highlighting reasons for the sustainability and effectiveness of the movement.

A workshop was held on 27 January 2000. The workshop brought together 15 individuals who had been involved in Águeda in the beginning. They included parents, teachers, social workers and medical doctors. The purpose of the workshop was to revitalise the contacts that had constituted the movement from 1975 to 1984 and to begin to trace the history. People were asked to bring photos, newspaper clippings, reports and any other relevant material or documentation on this period.

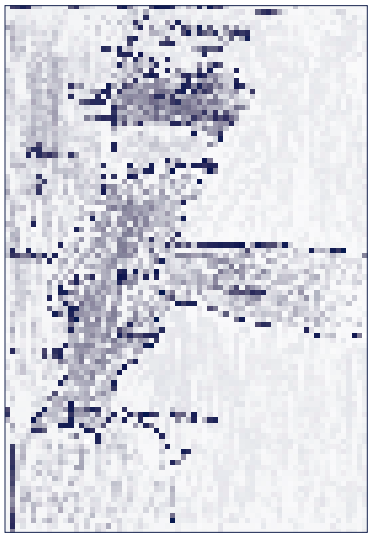
Some of the participants had not seen each other for years, but soon the discussions were under way. The people were assisted as much as possible in remaining spontaneous, but were encouraged to place details into a larger picture and to set incidents in chronological order. They were given a framework of keywords around which to organise discussions, such as 'practice', 'concepts' and 'outcomes'.

Mothers reflected on their great personal growth and on the support they had experienced after they had joined Águeda. Others told stories of the freedom the movement provided to take risks and make mistakes and of the way this became a resource that later influenced institutions and policy-makers. Some people spoke with great affection about children with severe handicaps and about the impact of Águeda's recognition of the needs of these children, who, today, have become integrated in society. Everything was important; nothing could be left out, and there were so many different versions of events and opinions about causes and effects.

Subsequently, the EI team relied on action-research methods to document the Águeda Movement. The team combined group meetings and interviews among key individuals so as to include important stakeholders and explore numerous hinge points. During this process, the EI provided Águeda with an informal space for reflection about its history. The group encounters helped the movement reconstruct and reinterpret its past and understand its

1 The core of this summary is based on d'Espiney et al. (2001). Many details have also been found in Madeira (1998) and de los Angeles-Bautista (2003).

meaning from the point of view of the donors and programme participants who had been there at the time and who had been involved in the creation of the interventions. This enabled an exploration of the dynamism of Águeda and assisted in the capture of the movement's relevance to children, families and professionals on a more comprehensive basis. Rather than a description of the movement based on simple, direct interpretations, the aim was to produce a recontextualisation of the movement using as a guide the growth individuals had experienced through their participation in the movement.



Along the way, five dimensions of analysis were identified through which the movement could be interpreted. These were: 'events' (principal occurrences), 'affection' (the feelings of the stakeholders about the movement and among themselves, including towards the children), 'external influences' (the growth and actions of the participants with respect to the external world), 'concepts' (beliefs and ideologies) and 'effects' (impacts and outcomes).[2]

For its part, the aim of the El team was to discover the philosophical principles behind the birth of Águeda in order to consolidate the movement's experiences and become able to transfer them to new areas of social exclusion.

Hereafter is a summary of the history of the Águeda Movement as revealed through the EI.

A Spontaneous Response to a Need

On 25 April 1974, progressive citizens in Lisbon began openly challenging the Government and calling for an equal, democratic society. Red carnations, which were abundant in the flower shops of the capital that spring day, were collected by the crowds, often the soldiers themselves, and placed in the rifle barrels of the military personnel patrolling the streets of the city. Thus began Portugal's Carnation Revolution.

The period of rapid social transformation that followed was marked by the emergence of a vibrant young state that did not have well-defined goals and was seeking new orientations by tapping the enormous force for change that was being generated by the citizenry. The Portuguese people had become fascinated by the opportunity to establish a new civil society by putting together the pieces themselves based on consensus reached according to democratic principles implemented within small groups.

It was a heady time. Literacy campaigns were being promoted by the Armed Forces Movement[3] to help the poor and the marginalised; school administrations were experimenting with democratic management, and students were becoming active in the

2 The summary published here concentrates mainly on the roles and the initiatives of the professional stakeholders. The study of the last two dimensions will eventually bring into the circle of the discussion the children, families and communities who were viewed as the beneficiaries at the start of the movement.

3 The *Movimento das Forças Armadas* was organised in secret by a group of captains. It led the revolutionary transition in April 1974. The literacy campaigns relied on methods identified by Paulo Freire, a renowned Brazilian pedagogical theorist.

reformed civil service. Even families were joining with like-minded neighbours to establish activist structures that could respond to local concerns and meet local needs.

In the northern city of Porto on the Atlantic coast, the parents of disabled children formed one of these associations to confront the problems of children with special needs. In 1975, members of the association visited Águeda, which is in west-central Portugal about 80 kilometres from Porto. The parents pointed out the community's lack of educational structures and social services for children and youth with special needs.[4] Indeed, in that year, the 51 educational institutions (nurseries through secondary schools) in the municipality of Águeda and the surrounding parishes counted among their students only two children with (relatively minor) special needs, though there were also some children exhibiting learning difficulties.

The *Centro de Paralisia Cerebral* (Centre for Cerebral Palsy) in Coimbra, south of Águeda, was similarly an offspring of the Carnation Revolution. It had been established by the *Associação Portuguesa de Paralisia Cerebral* (Portuguese Association of Cerebral Palsy) in 1975. The professionals at the centre did not stay in their offices, but travelled around, answering requests from the families of children with disabilities and from professionals in need of advice and support. In general, their answers led to the creation of special schools for mentally handicapped children within the *Cooperativa de Educação e Reabilitação de Cidadãos Inadaptados* (Cooperative for the Education and Rehabilitation of Handicapped Citizens). Centro professionals also visited Águeda in 1975.

Mainly as a result of the interest of these two organisations, a small group of educators, paediatricians, other professional volunteers and parents of disabled children toured Águeda searching for disabled children. They discovered many who were not being properly served by the education system.

The recognition of the extent of the problem and of the difficulties being experienced especially by the children and their families prompted the group to seek local responses. At a meeting with professionals from the Centre for Cerebral Palsy, the parents of a child with Down Syndrome mentioned that this child had been attending a regular kindergarten for two years without any particular inconvenience. The educator responsible for the child's kindergarten 'integration' (according to the terminology then in use) was also present at the meeting.

Because it seemed to act as an antidote to the isolation of the children that had so distressed the group, the integrated approach was identified as a solution with potential, even though it was opposite to the one adopted by the centre's special schools for mentally handicapped children.

As an initial step, Bela Vista was opened in Águeda as an integrated kindergarten. This meant that the kindergarten implemented a policy of 'inclusion', whereby the teachers did not segregate the disabled children into special facilities, but introduced them into all activities, events and environments as much as possible on equal terms with other children. Bela Vista reserved 20% of its places for children with disabilities. The slogan of the kindergarten was 'The sun, school and friends belong to everyone'.

Unlike the special schools, which placed their focus on disability, the educators at Bela Vista sought to value all the children first as individuals. This led them to pay more attention to discovering the uniqueness in each child and to attempting to provide the conditions so

4 The right to free, public education is recognised in the Portuguese Constitution.

that personal characteristics, capacities and talents could blossom. Many of the educators undertook a great deal of individual enquiry in an effort to identify pedagogical methods that would be adequate for all the children. The presence of disabled children alongside other children in Bela Vista thus became a fruitful source of additional learning among the educators.

Expanding the Experiment while Keeping the Individual at the Core

In 1976, an initial survey of children with disabilities was completed in the municipality of Águeda. A second survey was carried out in 1977 and 1978. These surveys attempted to cover every household. They presented Bela Vista and potential partners in the Águeda experiment with a more accurate picture of the lives of disabled children within the parishes of the municipality.

The policy current at the time in Portugal favoured the integration in mainstream education only of children with physical disabilities, but no mental deficiencies. It was estimated that this approach covered no more than 10% of all children with special needs. There were also major institutions for deaf and blind children. Children with serious behavioural problems were sent to mental health centres for children or to psychiatric hospitals in bigger cities, such as Coimbra, Porto, or Lisbon. In Lisbon, some special classes were offered for children with mild mental deficiencies. Children with moderate or serious mental deficiencies were catered for only in large special education institutions or in private schools in larger towns or in the interior of the country. All these institutions were funded by the Ministry of Social Welfare.

In 1979, a survey was conducted of adults with disabilities. The goal was to understand the situation of disabled people who had not experienced any of the educational solutions then being applied. It was discovered that Águeda's marginalised also included youths and adults who were virtually invisible except to family members and close neighbours. These people had been ostracised or hidden away and often lived in great loneliness and quite horrible physical circumstances, receiving at best occasional help from distant rehabilitation centres.

These various surveys led to campaigns to raise community awareness and generate a change in the conditions in which people with special needs were living. The Águeda group worked with professionals and others in the development of more inclusive practices among families, in neighbourhoods and within communities. The group negotiated with service providers to raise access among the marginalised, and the concept of integration came gradually to be accepted in other service areas. This effort, along with the mobilisation of teachers and parents behind integration, led naturally to more social interaction and communication in support of children and families in general. Informal support networks emerged to assist families, teachers and service providers in decision-making. These networks were an important step in the Águeda experiment.

Thus, for example, a local informal group of 28 individuals involved in various areas of health and education came together in 1976. Eventually called the *Grupo de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento da Criança* (Support Group for Childhood Development), these people supported the integration of disabled children and dependent youth up to the end of primary education, thereby facilitating the access of these children to secondary and higher education. During the 1978/1979 school year, the group, along with the Children's Hospital of Coimbra, the principal paediatric hospital serving central Portugal, drew up the *Plano para Águeda* ('Plan for Águeda'). The plan, published by the local newspaper, addressed the problems of children with disabilities holistically and included preventive measures and the promotion

of the development, socialisation and education of the children within families and community institutions.

Meanwhile, it was necessary to prepare for the inclusion in primary school of the first disabled children who had been integrated in kindergarten, and the first children with mental handicaps were integrated in the Santo Martinho primary school during the 1979/1980 school year. At the same time, Bela Vista opened the Creativity Centre, which undertook to provide additional assistance to disabled children outside school hours, but in a manner complementary to the regular education system.

An Experiment becomes a Movement

> *'I had doubts, but I went there. My way of being was altered. It influenced me as a person.'*
>
> – Eduarda, a stakeholder

> *'I became aware of social injustice. The integrated children at Bela Vista have influenced my decisions about life ever since.'*
>
> – Isabel Santiago, who acted as a 'zone element'

In the late 1970s, because of factors related to the Carnation Revolution, a preoccupation with social justice and the rights of each individual to participate fully in society had become pervasive throughout Portugal. The obstacles to social participation faced by the disadvantaged tended to be understood as human problems that society as a whole must address. The integration of children and youth with special needs into the social structures of the community began to enter the public consciousness as a means of furthering the more global social project of taking care of people who are more dependent or marginalised.

When the successes of Bela Vista and the Águeda group generated interest in the press, people were therefore drawn to the experiment. Meetings and conferences began referring to Bela Vista and Águeda. Parent associations responded positively to the integration of disabled children and children with learning difficulties in nurseries and primary schools. The concepts of integration and inclusion started being applied in many places throughout the country. Prominent supporters of special schools switched their allegiance to the Águeda idea and began to argue against the special school approach. The number of new special schools for disabled children was declining by 1981 at least in part due to the work in Águeda.

The experiment in Águeda thus gradually became the 'Águeda Movement', a loose association of individuals working with service providers and communities to render education and other social services more sensitive to the needs of disabled children and their families, but also to maximise service access by the marginalised in general. Professional schools for teachers, nurses and other social service personnel asked if trainees could work with Águeda, while other groups seeking ways to meet the

COURTESY OF THE ÁGUEDA MOVEMENT

A visit to a pre-school during an EI conference

needs of disabled children requested the assistance of Águeda. For many of the people who joined the movement at that time, it was a remarkable experience.

Establishing Structures and Creating Services

Special education teams

The Ministry of Education offered a strategic endorsement to Águeda by sending educational experts to Bela Vista and, in 1981, created roving *equipas de educação especial* ('special education teams') to work with parents and provide expertise on integration, inclusion and other innovations to teachers and education authorities in mainstream schools. Each team consisted of an educator, a social worker and a doctor. The common aim of the teams was to analyse relevant issues and discover and create opportunities for children, especially children with special needs, to participate in all facets of daily life.

The teams sought answers to questions such as 'What are the problems that worry parents and educators?', 'What do the children need to learn to increase their autonomy, self-esteem and participation in their families and schools and among their peers?' and 'What resources are available to help achieve these goals?'. The teams tried to ensure that information and expertise circulated efficiently among mothers and families and to guarantee timely planning and assistance for the benefit of children with disabilities.

Whenever possible, the children themselves would be asked about their preferences, interests and concerns. Educators often invited the children's school friends and brothers and sisters to relate the likes and dislikes of the children. The responses were registered in books in which new ideas and innovative approaches were also recorded.

BVLF, ANGELA ERNST

Children in one of the pre-schools

The Águeda special education team was among the first to be created. Although some of the members of this team had not had specialised training, the experience of the educators at Bela Vista and other nursery schools in Águeda that had been involved in the integration of children with special needs was considered particularly valuable, and the choice represented an acknowledgement of the pioneering work of Bela Vista.

The health centre

The Support Group for Childhood Development, which had been instrumental in drafting the Plan for Águeda and which was gradually becoming a more professional group, initiated local campaigns in order to promote the establishment of a health centre in Águeda. With the assistance of the Children's Hospital of Coimbra and the Ministry of Education, the health centre opened in a local hospital in Águeda in March 1981. The health centre offered a children's clinic and, eventually, a maternal health and family planning clinic. The children's clinic ran an early childhood health programme involving consultations, screening and preventive diagnosis. Many mothers relied on the consultations, during which they learned about the problems and risks in early childhood development and care.

The centre was the first public health unit in Águeda to focus on maternal, infant and child health. This aided in mobilising pubic opinion, backed by the parish hospital administration, in favour of the creation of a public service that could guarantee primary health care for children and the wider community. Soon, the health centre had become involved as an institutional partner in most community activities aimed at solving problems in child development and education, and it cooperated closely in relevant initiatives of the Águeda special education team, nursery schools and district and regional health care services.

In 1984, the health centre instituted a family doctor programme in keeping with a nationwide government policy. Rather than relying only on paediatricians and gynaecologists, the health centre began depending more and more on doctors who could care for the whole family, though the centre's emphasis remained on children at risk.

Home visits and a centre-based programme

In 1981, the Support Group for Childhood Development undertook an examination of the situation of 0-to-2-year-olds. This generated a better understanding of the risks faced by many infants and led educators at Bela Vista to start an experimental home visiting programme. The initial visits were conducted periodically at the homes of 19 children who were living in high-risk situations or who were known to be experiencing developmental problems. During the visits, the Bela Vista counsellors offered advice to the mothers, especially about the health and education of the children. The home visitors also assisted the mothers in creating toys from everyday objects inside the home. Sometimes, the meetings included other family members and neighbours. The visits allowed the Support Group for Childhood Development to expand its social support network and helped reduce the danger of child abuse, neglect and abandonment. Later in 1981, the experimental programme was taken over by the Águeda special education team. The team used the programme partly as a means to prepare for the integration of disabled children in kindergarten and primary school.

In 1982, the Bela Vista educators undertook to provide educational support for very young children through a centre-based programme. Children as young as 1 year of age were accepted in the nursery school, and, during the first year of the programme, the number of children accepted in the school rose by more than 30.

Around the same time, more attention began to be paid to the organisation of a kindergarten by other groups in the community. Approaches were also pinpointed that would facilitate the integration of disabled children in the regular school system. This involved the drafting of child development plans for each individual child. The plans were drawn up as cooperative efforts by families and educators and with the assistance of the Support Group for Childhood Development. Each child was evaluated carefully. A manual, 'João's Programme', was published in 1981 as a guide in the creation of these plans.

The development consultation team and the multidisciplinary team

It was now being recognised that the cooperation among the health, education and social support sectors, which had been informally facilitated by dedicated professionals during the initial phase of the movement, had played an important role in the establishment of new services. Two types of teams were created to solidify this cooperation.

The development consultation team was created in 1981 as a continuation of the clinical consultation service in the health centre. The team included a paediatrician, an educator

from the special education team and a health centre psychologist. The team sought to support communities after they had drafted local childhood care and development plans.

Six *equipas multiprofissionais* ('multidisciplinary teams') were created in the country in 1982 as two-year pilot experiments. The life of the teams was extended, in 1984, for two more years. In Águeda, the multidisciplinary team, like the development consultation team, was based at the health centre.[5]

> *'[A] very determined philosophy of action, the team's orientation is "transdisciplinary", which some members characterise as the non-existence of defined roles inside the team.'*
>
> – The evaluation committee, November 1986

The two types of teams were expected to play a complementary role with regard to existing services. They provided guidance and support to parents and to health and education professionals when institutions had exhausted their own possibilities of understanding and solving problems for children in a parish. They represented an extension of the actions of the informal groups that had supported school integration during the initial phase of the Águeda experiment.

After 1985, the Águeda health centre started a system of 'participatory management according to objectives', whereby the diagnosis of a situation was discussed and built up locally for the identification of priorities. The participatory management priorities included assistance for individuals at risk or facing serious difficulties in gaining access to primary health care.

The development consultation team and the multidisciplinary teams took an integrated approach to the solution of the problems of the parents and professionals with whom they worked. They encouraged habits of good listening among team members. They placed a great deal of importance on the enrichment and enlargement of social networks that could supply formal and informal support to children's families. They met directly with specialists working in the regional services. This ensured access to information and other kinds of resources and guaranteed coordination in relation to the problems and needs of children and their families.

The 'zone element'

> *'We were present in several settings within a community. We were at the school, the kindergarten, the home, the health care unit . . . . We knew almost all the families with problems, and it was easy to pull the people together because we knew how to tie up [all] the loose ends. I had a community group in Casa do Povo, and people came there to talk to me.'*
>
> – Isabel Santiago, who acted as a 'zone element'

Sometime after 1982, the term 'children with problems' began to replace the term 'children with disabilities'. In the health centre, it had been noticed that a relatively larger number of children who had been deprived of food, who had gained no weight, or who had been

5 The Support Group for Childhood Development, which had been experiencing pressure to become organised more formally and had been compelled to present a plan of activities to obtain more funding, was converted into a multidisciplinary team in December 1982.

in accidents were living in particular areas in the community. It became clear that, due to circumstances of social deprivation and marginalisation, some people could not reach services that should have been, in principle, accessible to everyone. In these poverty-ridden areas, people not only lacked access to health services, but they were also unaware of their rights to social security, while the children seldom completed elementary school. This was the beginning of the realisation that some children are more at risk of acquiring disabilities and that social and economic deprivation might be a significant risk factor.

The special education team therefore created the *elemento de zona* ('zone element'), a post held by a person whose task it was to optimise the management of resources and address global needs in poorer neighbourhoods in which children who were disabled seemed more prevalent. Among their many duties, the zone elements helped families arrange medical visits with family doctors, even accompanying them to the appointments, and showed them how to register with the social security system, since many of the families did not know how to prepare the necessary documentation. The zone elements subsequently inaugurated the practice of keeping parish dossiers containing survey information on children with problems and indicating those who were receiving assistance.

The concept of 'the family at risk'

In 1985, around 25 deaf children, 120 children with moderate to serious learning difficulties and about 10 children with serious physical disabilities were attending public schools in Águeda. In neighbouring parishes, another 35 or so children with special needs were also attending schools with the support of their parents and teachers and some help from the special education teams. These children, their peers and parents had learned to live together and appreciate each other.

This furthered the acceptance of the Águeda philosophy and helped develop new educational skills among teachers. As the teachers and parents shared their experiences through the press and at seminars and meetings organised by Bela Vista, the commitment to search for solutions to new problems was strengthened.

The varied initiatives of the Águeda movement among the disabled and then among the disadvantaged among whom disability seemed to be more prevalent gradually led to an awareness of the importance of the family as a unit in terms of the basic social and economic well-being of its members. By 1987, the concept of the 'family at risk' was being propagated in speeches.

> *'It was a turning point when the concept was communicated after a survey of families . . . [The idea] was received with surprise at the regional social security centre.'*
>
> – A social service worker

A study on the causes of child mortality was also conducted in 1987 after there had been an increase in the infant mortality rate in 1985 and 1986. The study showed that all deaths classified as 'avoidable' occurred in 'at-risk families'. Two children had died of starvation. The results of the study created a stir in Águeda. Nobody wanted to believe that hunger existed in Águeda, though people who had been working in the community (the zone elements) knew about it. After that, a milk bank was set up, and this later led to the establishment of the Milk Bank Association.

BVLF, BABETH LEFUR

Painting at a pre-school

The community development group and the community intervention group

With a view to imparting good preventive care practices, the roving educators of the special education team had been providing early childhood care and home support from the beginning. They had worked especially closely with children who were showing the first signs of deficiencies.

In 1982, the educators began working with children within the context of their daily lives outside school. This was an outgrowth of the search among the educators for children experiencing social deprivation since these children seemed particularly susceptible to disability and other serious problems, but it also reflected the interest of the educators in social interactions and the importance of informal social support networks for children. They started carrying out evaluations of the children's relationships and the roles the children adopt in the non-school environment.

This created problems for the team, for its lists of children to be watched and cared for grew enormously. Indeed, when the members of the special education team arrived in the neighbourhoods, they were surrounded by the children who spent a great deal of their time on the streets. According to the team philosophy of non-exclusion, these children were to be counselled by the team members who discovered them.

> *'[T]hese children hung out on the streets because their mothers were not at home. . . . I began to meet groups of 50 children. Now and then mothers came to help me, but, instead of helping, they needed a lot of attention themselves, and the situation grew more complicated.'*
>
> – An educator

The first *grupo de desenvolvimento comunitário* ('community development group') evolved from this experience in around 1983. Initially, the groups were entirely informal and mostly consisted of the gangs of children that had gathered around the educators during their neighbourhood visits. Eventually, another sort of group, known as the *grupo de intervenção comunitária* ('community intervention group'), consisting of children, youth, parents, volunteers and professionals, was also formed. These groups offered an informal space where it was possible to reflect about the health of the community and where the culture of the group could be rebuilt. Problem situations and potential solutions were discussed openly and in depth. Knowledge became a common ground where there were no barriers.

'[The community intervention group's] establishment resulted from a need to create a space beyond institutions, a space that had nothing to do with the institutions each one belonged to. It is an informal space, open to play activities . . . . it is also a space for training.'

– Ribeiro de Lima, psychiatrist, Aveiro Mental Health Centre

'I started in the middle of the street, near an elementary school. I got acquainted with teachers who collaborated and with boys from extremely poor families. Rain or shine, we met in a cold place . . . , two or three boys in the beginning, many later on. After the creation of other community groups, we established an exchange with them. Then came a girl whose mother let our meetings take place in her cellar, the headquarters of the group. We had a kitchen, where we prepared bread with sausage and fruit preserves. The group was open to families.'

– An educator

By 1988, more than 500 children were participating in community development groups in the municipality of Águeda and the surrounding parishes. Each group included at least 20 children. The groups all had their own names and their own meeting rooms and work spaces in churches, private homes, basements, or abandoned buildings. They had found ways to raise funds to support their activities. Some sold sweets; others painted pots, and still others created decorative objects from naturally occurring local materials or industrial or commercial debris. The restoration of public spaces and the cultivation of small kitchen gardens offered significant educational potential and a means of providing worthwhile, unforgettable experiences for the children. Most of the parents were involved in repair work, needlework and the recycling of school books and teaching aids.

Limits on Informality, Restraints on Spontaneity

The Government had been caught up, like the people, in the power of the mass creative enthusiasm of the Carnation Revolution. It was open in admitting its lack of knowledge and its belief that it could learn from the approaches spontaneously originating within communities to deal with the new realities in Portugal.

Gradually, however, it began looking for viable models for the structures that a government naturally seeks to implement order and foster stability. Administrative rules were drafted to regulate services, and fresh ideas and innovations had also to surmount bureaucratic obstacles. The Basic Law of Social Security was passed in 1984 to place certain parts of the social sector on a fixed footing. The purpose of the Basic Law of the Educational System, passed in October 1986, was to undertake 'a global and coherent reform of the structures,

methods and contents of the [educational] system.'

COURTESY OF THE ÁGUEDA MOVEMENT

Gatherings are frequent in the movement

Meanwhile, the pressures for modernisation and the demands for standardisation generated because of the effort of Portugal to become integrated within the European Union allowed less and less room for experimentation and lay volunteerism in public services. Professional certificates soon began to be required for staff work in the delivery of support services. The social policy options available to communities increasingly became more restricted by forces that tended to be remote rather than local.

'Special', 'integrated', or 'inclusive' education was no exception. The long lists of at-risk children kept by the special education teams had to be cast away. The zone elements lost their flexibility, and their work became strictly regulated. The educational bureaucracy was expanded. The national system sought to shape local systems according to the logic it was seeking to establish. Local social service units had less power to engineer changes suggested within the communities. They were bombarded with requests for data and directives from above. The directives often seemed to deal with the need to cut costs.

Given the new rules and regulations, Bela Vista and the health centre, as an education institute and a specialised health institute, respectively, had difficulty implementing the unique, innovative approaches that had characterised them in the past.[6]

'[Our] work grew more rigid. We became more like technicians and more like [regular public] schools and the [public] system.'

– Gabriela, an educator

'The health centre lost its power as an institution. It had no projects as an institution.'

– María José

'Bela Vista had difficulty incorporating the new dynamics of innovation.'

– Isabel Cristina

An alternative education project

'It was highly significant to my life. I learned to see things in a different manner. . . . [The children] always ran away because they were hungry. At a specific moment, I was unable to control the group; by 10:30 a.m., they would run away to steal milk at school or fruits from a neighbour. I managed to arrange a meal, and the group began to structure around that. As the children grew, they started to establish rules . . . . The community and the school began to understand . . . , though it was hard. They started to understand that these children were like other children.'

– An educator

6 Though a private institution, Bela Vista was subject to certain regulations of the social service system.

By this time, at the end of the 1980s, ad hoc projects had become a commonly accepted strategy of intervention in the flourishing civil society of Portugal. A project involving the community development groups was proposed in 1989 and implemented beginning in 1990. It aimed at creating alternative educational spaces for children and youth in families at risk. It was made possible thanks to funding from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Lisbon) and the Aga Khan Foundation (Geneva), through which educators were found. Auxiliary staff were hired through employment programmes.

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These children are like all children

The project was noteworthy in that it succeeded in tapping the broader Águeda Movement without compromising infrastructure components, such as the zone elements, Bela Vista and the health centre, that had become subject to regulatory strictures. Thus, for example, though the special education teams had become 'formal' structures, team members were able to transfer their expertise and experience to the project in their spare time. This created a continuity between the role of the community development groups as informal entities that had evolved from the work of the special education teams and their role as the focus of a partnership project that had become viable because of funding supplied by private organisations. Indeed, Bela Vista served as the headquarters of the project and provided management support in cooperation with the health centre, the special education teams and local authorities.

This curious partnership benefited the community development groups greatly. The special education teams had been unable previously to monitor the daily activities of the groups except informally a few times a week, but, after the groups became the focus of the alternative education project, they were assisted on a daily basis by educators and assistants who were employed by the project or paid through the private foundations. This more clearly met the needs of the children and their parents.

The project funding was limited, however, and did not ensure employment stability for the educators and assistants. When the funding ended, the community development groups tried to find ways to continue the alternative education initiative. In every parish with a community development group, a support structure appeared that included professionals, parents and other citizens. In 1994, the successes of the project among children and families in each community prompted parish leaders or parish councils to open spaces for the community development groups and facilitated the creation of new local associations and institutions that established support services for children. The community-based groups were restructured in 1995 and became social-educational associations. The target population was also expanded to include people at risk no matter their ages.

Seminars and training

Between 1978 and 1985, so as to share knowledge about the Águeda approach, Bela Vista promoted annual seminars among parents, teachers and the community at large. The

seminars also involved professionals and non-professionals who were visiting Águeda to learn how similar initiatives might be repeated in their parishes. The seminars included direct exchanges, photo exhibits and detailed documentation.

Subsequently, the seminars were held occasionally. Thus, for example, a seminar was organised in 1990 among professionals in education, health and other social service sectors who were preoccupied by the problems of families at risk. The result was a project, partly Government financed, that was aimed at supporting families in the construction of homes.

Meanwhile, training and 'self-learning' initiatives were also being conducted among small groups. These might include, for instance, training in the recording of significant events and in the analysis of the context within which processes and activities occurred. In such exercises, the perceptions, deductions and experiences of important actors in Águeda interventions became training resources. The goal was to ensure that the people who were becoming associated with the movement would constantly examine the meaning of social exclusion and never become complacent about it.

Although the multidisciplinary teams entered an official limbo in 1987, they played a key role in the emergence of on-going training within the Águeda Movement several years later.[7] The teams remained active by undertaking routine evaluations. In 1992, when the bureaucratic restrictions on the health centre became more severe, the team members decided to take up some of the slack by carrying out informal training among parents involved in the community development groups. Then, because educators were often absent from classrooms while they worked with families and communities, the community development groups asked the multidisciplinary teams to organise the training of nursery and pre-school assistants.

The teams ran training courses for two groups of assistants. The courses lasted two years, from 1992 to 1994, and were followed by courses for two additional groups from 1994 to 1996. The trainees eventually worked among the community development groups, but also as assistants in several municipal institutions for children.

The theatre group and offshoot projects

The Theatre Group of Águeda was active at the health centre from 1988 to 1995. From 1992 to 1994, Bela Vista ran, along with the health education unit of the health centre, a health education programme that relied on the theatre group. The actors were children, and the plays dealt with health promotion concepts. The community development groups all took part.

The theatre approach introduced a new idea into the movement: health is a resource that belongs to citizens, and health education and promotion can therefore be successful only if citizens assume the responsibility this ownership implies. Although the starting point was the effort to increase the awareness of health concepts, the initiative reinforced the value of theatre as a means of cultivating group ties and fostering good citizenship.

'Each [child] learns that it is unique and indispensable in its role . . . , but the differences enrich the whole: nobody is valuable alone . . . ; even the smaller roles are essential . . . .'

– A commentator

7 A 'final' report on the multidisciplinary teams was released in April 1987. The teams seemed to have been forgotten by the Government thereafter. Nobody, it appeared, was aware that a decision had not been taken to extend the life of the 'pilot experiment' or to wind it down. The teams continued to be headquartered in the health centre, though the members only participated on an informal basis.

The plays naturally led to the greater participation of children in projects. From the very beginning, the children presented their plays at parties and public festivals, but also at meetings on health education. Starting in 1995, at these gatherings, the children were questioned about the play experience. Eventually, this became a common practice. Health education became the 'excuse' to gather children together to promote good health and good citizenship among others. Through short plays presented at congresses and training sessions, the children became 'little teachers' who could speak about the projects and discuss issues through their own experiences.

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Even the small ones are essential

A series of projects now appeared that sought to take advantage of this innovation and incorporate community learning strategies that involved children and others more directly. In January 1995, two existing projects, *Viver Melhor entre Nós* ('Living Better Together') and *À Nossa Saúde* ('To Our Health') were combined into the *Viver à Saúde da Comunidade* ('Living for the Health of the Community') project, which ran until December 1996. In these projects, whenever possible, children, youth and sometimes entire families were asked to talk about their lives not only in terms of health, but also in terms of risk or exclusion.

The *Contador de Sonhos* ('The Narrator of Dreams') project took this trend one step further. Because of the institutionalisation of the community development groups that was taking place during this period, there emerged a need to create new informal spaces for meetings, planning and joint reflection on areas such as families at risk. The Contador de Sonhos project helped satisfy this need by promoting encounters among children, families, professionals and other community members at which any participant could speak openly about subjects of relevance to the group. Moreover, activities were organised that involved the use of imagery, myth, dance, music, the plastic arts, or theatre to 'animate' the public space and encourage the expression of the inner realities of individuals. People were urged to share their dreams.

The wheels of reflection

The informal meetings at which various groups hold discussions in a structured or unstructured way on subjects of common or individual interest have represented the heart of the Águeda Movement. These informal spaces have come to be called *rodas* ('wheels') because the participants typically sit together in a circle or semicircle so that everyone can see each other.

Initially, the Support Group for Childhood Development offered the principal informal

space for discussion. When the support group became a multidisciplinary team in the early 1980s, the community development groups provided the space. When these groups likewise changed character during the 1990s, the informal space was no longer supplied in one 'location', but was dispersed among, for example, the various project groups.

This dispersion of the informal spaces created a sense of fragmentation. Nonetheless, in a manner not entirely conscious, cohesion was maintained among the projects and within the movement. Somehow, these various informal spaces continued to generate similar questions, discoveries, innovations and strategies. There seemed to be a sort of indirect communication, an osmosis.

This cohesion of the movement should not be surprising. The key to the movement over so many years has been inclusion, and this inclusion has been practiced scrupulously from the very beginning in all the discussions as well. Thus, for instance, at Bela Vista, the pre-schoolers sit on cushions in a semicircle to listen as each one of them takes his or her turn to tell a story. Likewise, there is normally a 'wheel hour' among the older children, during which, one by one, they talk about their problems, concerns, desires and plans. The 'wheels' among the professionals and other adults are similarly symmetrical.

The wheels are symmetrical not only in terms of the form, but also in terms of relationships. There is the same dedication to serious reflection and the same consideration for the opinions of others. Participants are respectful of differences and tolerate the errors of others, while learning to recognise their own errors. Individuality is appreciated, even as the group is constructed. The respect and the toleration generate a climate of confidence in which knowledge can be built up based on experience.

COURTESY OF THE ÁGUEDA MOVEMENT

Ties that bind, in Portugal

These 'wheels of reflection' have therefore favoured a culture within the movement that is based on the value attributed to the individual and to interpersonal relationships. This is the approach of the movement. This is a significant reason why there is a movement.

New Roads under Construction?

Creative forces were still being deployed and kept alive through the networks of the movement, but the process of institutionalisation seemed to be dampening innovation. Many of the initiatives started by the movement, such as the community development groups, had not survived institutionalisation in a recognisable form.

The projects were an answer, but some people were saying that the state had become an agency for projects. Projects were merely a method to compete for government subsidies. One was obliged to follow rules to obtain the subsidies, but the rules did not necessarily encourage conformity with the dynamics of good project design or with the steps required to reach worthwhile project goals. Concessions had usually to be made. The emphasis seemed more often to be on the project rather than the process, on the goal rather than the path.

This was the moment when the EI made its entrance, offering an additional informal space for reflection. People in the movement hoped that the EI exercise would assist them in telling

their story and understanding better who they are.

Has this occurred? What can this history of the Águeda Movement teach us?

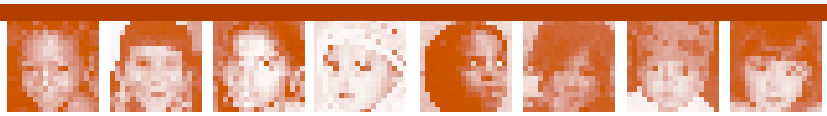
The history is rich and inspiring. It speaks of an almost militant process initiated by parents, professionals and other persons who had come together, more or less by chance, and were committed, first, to the integration of disabled children into educational establishments and, then, to the provision of social services, especially education and health care, to all children with special needs and to families left at the margin by socio-economic deprivation. The history speaks of a decrease in the demand for special schools and of an increase in the access of children and their families to education and other social services. It speaks of the dedication to the rights of children to education and wider citizenship that became a beacon in favour of compassion, respect and tolerance for human diversity.

The history offers numerous examples of ways to address the problems of disabled children and their parents, but also the problems of other people who are marginalised. It shows the advantages of spontaneity and informal activism. It shows an organisation that consists not of a fixed management hierarchy, but of individuals committed to a goal and free to seek to achieve the goal according to their lights. The history of the movement cannot be claimed by a few. It is owned by the many. It is the story of spaces where people meet to gain from each other strength, courage and vision so that they can respond together to challenges.

The Águeda Movement today is becoming based more and more on the strength created and developed among people through interpersonal ties. The efforts characteristic of the movement are becoming centred more and more on the goal of enhancing the dignity of individuals not so much by enhancing the way others see them, but by enhancing the way they see themselves before others. This is the essence of the process of empowerment: to encourage individuals to discover, nurture and exercise the power within themselves.

This is the challenge now facing the movement: to find new methods to continue to build an inclusive society. This may require the rediscovery of old, abandoned strategies, a larger investment in new formal or informal networks and partners and the recovery of new spaces and new forms of intervention. The challenge may require learning all over again how to sustain the philosophy and the culture of the movement, its instituting power, while advancing the cause of a civil society seeking positive answers.

The challenge now facing the movement may only be the same challenge it has always been facing.



9. Another Story: The EI on Its Own Terms

This chapter offers a brief account of several unexpected outcomes of the Effectiveness Initiative. It also elucidates some of the tensions within the EI process. This includes the biases and assumptions identified among EI actors and the difficulties involved in the 'translation' of the words used by stakeholders into reasonable general statements about effectiveness. It seeks to promote a better understanding of the EI and generate another axis of dialogue about effectiveness.

Lessons about the Application of the Qualitative Tools

One of the unexpected outcomes of the EI was the positive experience gained in the application of numerous qualitative tools among stakeholders in diverse settings. This experience represents the background before which any translation of the testimony of the stakeholders into general statements about effectiveness must occur.

Each of the teams and programmes participating in the Effectiveness Initiative were asked to create or adapt qualitative tools that could contribute to the exploration among the stakeholders. Because the Foundation recognised that it is important to document the lessons learned from the experiences of the programmes, as well as the lessons learned about the EI exploration itself, the EI involved an effort to record the process of the application of the qualitative tools. In hindsight, one can see that the implementation of the EI tools across the programmes was surprisingly consistent within the diversity of programme approaches. This means that, though this was not necessarily intended, the EI tools were 'tested' in several programme contexts. A rich source of secondary information about effectiveness – in this case, the effectiveness of the tools – can therefore be added to the outcomes of the EI.

A flexible approach

Because each of the EI teams was allowed great freedom in the design and implementation of its enquiry and in drafting the reports on its investigations, the eight team reports vary widely in format, the topics examined and the perspectives taken. This rendered cross-site comparisons difficult. However, it generated an unexpected advantage. By being so distinctive, each report highlighted different aspects of the EI exploration. Taken together, the reports therefore supplied more varied and abundant information on the EI process and a more thorough picture of the EI approach than might have been the case had the teams been asked to follow fixed research procedures and standard reporting parameters or a structured report outline.

Eagerness and enthusiasm

The use of the EI toolkit provided a great deal of room for the stakeholders to visualise and examine their opinions and perceptions. Partly because of this, the stakeholders were often more enthusiastic and generally more eager to discuss their viewpoints and their experiences, and the talk flowed freely. The diversity of the feedback was remarkable. The enquiry thus produced a range of information on the past, the objectives, the advantages and the limitations of the programmes.

A space for reflection

> *'There was an objective established for this study which was to ask people to explore by themselves what made their programmes effective. Therefore, what we were doing was an exploratory study, and what we get are the answers, stories, anecdotes that people have to share. But even we have a plus: as a result of this opportunity to explore their programmes, some effectiveness was generated because people realised that, by thinking about the effectiveness of their programmes, they had the chance to do things better or to be aware of why they were doing what they do. A space for reflection was created.'*
>
> – Arelys Moreno de Yánez, EI coordinator, Bernard van Leer Foundation

The application of the EI tools helped the stakeholders reflect in new ways on the programmes. It thereby assisted them to a better understanding of the programmes and of their own involvement. Frequently, because of the tools, they found new energy, and their participation became more active and beneficial for the programmes, for the communities and for themselves.

Capacity-building

Three of the teams (India, the Philippines and Portugal) chose to use the application of the qualitative tools primarily as a capacity-building activity. They integrated the EI interventions into their on-going programme operations to deepen the reflection and self-evaluation among stakeholders. This stimulated new insights that could generate more effective methods to work with and support young children and their families and communities. Moreover, through their participation in the application of the tools, including outside the context of the EI, the stakeholders became familiar with the new approaches and were thus able to expand their knowledge.

The programme timelines

Much of the collection of information undertaken within the EI through the tools was aimed at putting together portraits of the programmes. An important element in these portraits was the timeline. Through applications of the numerous tools among the diverse stakeholders, the EI teams uncovered many interesting and revealing details about the founding and the initial goals of the programmes that might have otherwise been forgotten and lost forever.

Dealing with mistakes, problems and barriers

A lot of progress can be achieved in any programme if there is a willingness to address difficulties and admit to, examine and learn from mistakes. Often, when this willingness is absent, individuals in positions of authority within the programme are to blame. Similarly, mistakes are sometimes made by good people who are trying their

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Planning. . .

best, but who are not being supported adequately. This also reflects on the management approach of the project leadership.

For these reasons, one finding that seemed to gather the agreement of the EI teams is that it takes courage for stakeholders to engage in an evaluation process. If a programme director, a donor, an executive committee, or a government official does not appreciate the learning that can come from dealing with mistakes or, because of the lack of a clear understanding or honest appraisal, does not provide a helping hand to the people who are trying to overcome daunting barriers within the programme, then it may be risky for staff members or other programme personnel to acknowledge problems openly. If the programme leadership wants to control the image of a programme, if donors wish to impose certain goals on a programme, or if staff are trying to revise the history of a programme to fit their own purposes, then how can other stakeholders tell that story straightforwardly? Too much honesty can likewise imperil the cooperation of funding agencies and therefore the continuation of the programme.

One challenge of the EI process was thus to devise methods to remove inappropriate value judgments about problems. It is important to gain insights into ways to spur stakeholders to overcome difficulties. Challenges must be articulated and mistakes and problems must be confronted in a manner that does not threaten the stakeholders, damage morale, or impede proper programme functioning.

The Parameters of the Application of the Qualitative Tools

Several assumptions and possible biases among actors in the EI were identified during the course of the EI exploration.[1]

> *'I was reminded that we see very little at first sight, perhaps because we only notice the obvious, or have preconceptions about what we will find, or are only there to look for what we want to see. . . . But it's only when we know the realities properly that we can understand how to respond.'*
>
> – Yánez (2001), page 4

A set of assumptions

In the EI, the Bernard van Leer Foundation aimed principally at the exploration of the effectiveness of early childhood development programmes through the application of participatory qualitative tools among stakeholders. One premise of this approach was that the people conducting the exploration – the members of the EI teams, the EI coordination team and, especially, the actors who helped design and organise the EI – added their own perspectives and agenda to the enquiry. Thus, they adopted a particular set of assumptions about effectiveness in terms of both theory and practice. Indeed, they could not have avoided making such assumptions and possessing a specific agenda. It is in the nature of such endeavours.

However, these actors gradually undertook to articulate more consciously the goals they were imposing on the exploration and some of the key assumptions they had made about

1 Much of the information here and in the following sections is from articles in Bernard van Leer Foundation (2001a).

effectiveness, as well as some of the significant impacts, positive and negative, of the criteria they were employing in decision-making. They announced some of the assumptions early on, while others were recognised only as more experience was gained during the implementation of the EI. The least one might say is that these 'interventionists' were not deluding themselves into believing they had embraced an entirely value-neutral approach.

According to these assumptions, effectiveness:

- *Cannot be defined in terms of a universally accepted truth.* There is no single characteristic or ingredient that would cause every early childhood development programme to be effective. They assumed there can be disagreement about the components of an effective programme. They were trying to understand the nature of the disagreements, and they were seeking to learn the points at which there was agreement in terms of the experiences of stakeholders.
- *Is a fluctuating concept.* An effort may become more effective or less effective as a result of changing circumstances over time.
- *Cannot be placed on a linear scale* according to which programmes might be ranked from most effective to least effective.
- *Cannot be identified or understood quickly.* It is not possible to capture the characteristics of an effective early childhood development programme accurately in a single snapshot. One must experience numerous, diverse situations within the context of the programme. This process cannot be reduced to the study of a static situation at a single point of time.
- *Consists of both process and outcomes.* Poor processes are incompatible with outcomes that are only good. Poor processes also generate negative outcomes. However, good processes may not generate only positive ends. Errors and missteps can occur, and there must be room for them. This is essential to the nature of effectiveness.
- *May reside in an organised whole,* yet vary within that organised whole. Some parts of the whole may be much more effective than others. Thus, effectiveness may sometimes be accurately represented as a profile that has been built up in sections or as a map that has been created from a series of particular views. This applies to programmes and organisations.
- *Is a result of experience* and a composite of many experiences.

Rose-coloured glasses and sacred cows

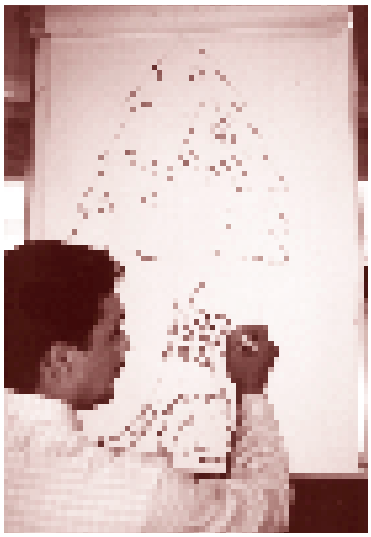
Another premise of the EI was that the people who implement early childhood development programmes and the people who are the targets of these programmes apply filters of varying degrees of subtlety and sophistication when they communicate their impressions or analyse information about their programmes. There are probably as many reasons for these burdens of prejudice, preconception and fixed notion as there are people who carry them forward. Some people may be too shy to express their true feelings. Others might have an axe to grind. Still others might be afraid of retribution from an authority figure. Many more might, out of habit, merely fail to examine carefully the attitudes and assumptions they exercise daily.

One common type of filter might be tagged 'the sacred cow'. This filter tends to accept statements by 'highly regarded' people without any test of veracity or accuracy. ('If so-and-so said it, it must be true.') The filter likewise tends to favour fashionable concepts such as 'participation' and statements such as 'it started with the people' to describe situations that, in fact, have not been participatory at all or arose, for instance, with only one or two

individuals who are not typical community members by most measures.

Another type of filter might be labelled 'the rose-coloured glasses'. This filter tends to strain out criticisms and negative perceptions so that statements such as 'this programme is free of problems', 'this programme is wonderful' and 'this programme is perfect' are the only descriptions that remain.

Nonetheless, it is important to respect and maintain some filters. It is useful and appropriate, for example, to protect the privacy of individuals and the confidentiality that is a hallmark of any equitable social service activity. Moreover, it is always a delicate matter to criticise donors, programme directors and other people in authority, though one would hope that such criticism might be given and taken in a spirit of wholesome reflection aimed at achieving improvement.



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Explanations. . .

Fitting the response to the needs

'If we want them to respond,' commented a development specialist in reference to the target population of a project, 'we have to teach them to respond.'

This rather bald statement is true to a certain extent, but there is also the risk that those implementing a project will distort the responses and lose the target population if they focus on teaching only ways of responding. Projects often tend to work with communities until the needs of the communities have been fit to the capacities of the project. It should be the other way around. A project should work with a community until the project, to the limit of its capacities, has satisfied the community's needs.

Nonetheless, no matter how purist one may seek to be in attempting to remain open, to listen accurately and to see truly, it is inevitable that all the implementers and stakeholders involved in a project will make assumptions, explicit or implicit, about the manner in which the lives of the target population should be transformed. They would not be active in the project if they did not believe they and the project were not offering exceptional benefits.

To counteract the filters or, rather, to take account of them and work around them and despite them, the actors involved in the EI adopted the approach of applying numerous methods to allow the stakeholders to express their unique understanding of programmes, with which, after all, they were more familiar than were any of the outsiders. In the meantime, the EI teams were not obliged to make discoveries in a day, or a week, or a month, but they were offered many months and even years so that, by steady contact, they might become familiar with the meanings of the words of the stakeholders, the contexts of their lives and the effects and the effectiveness of the programmes.

The challenge facing the EI facilitators, whether within the EI teams or at the Foundation, was therefore to help the stakeholders in the programmes to engage in a collective attempt to construct an understanding of effectiveness that was based on their own words.

Translating the Words of Stakeholders into Concepts

How is one to attempt reasonably to draw general statements about the attributes and sources of effectiveness in diverse settings out of the testimony of stakeholders who are employing words that have meaning only within unique settings?

> *'The EI is challenged to create a terminology within the EI group that is accessible to others as well, while retaining the distinctiveness of each site's world of content. The EI works in two opposite directions at the same time: to create a common language, rules and concepts of the research process, yet carefully maintain the multiplicity of concepts and languages concerning the contents of the projects and the effectiveness of intervention in early childhood.'*
>
> – From Lipsky et al. (2002)

Because of its reliance on qualitative tools and its philosophical resistance to quantitative indicators, the EI approach to the exploration of the effectiveness of the programmes was bound to be a subtle, difficult endeavour. It was employing context-determined methodologies that tended to generate numerous perspectives on the practice in early childhood development. Indeed, the EI actors purposely avoided insisting that the programme teams, without variation, apply standardised qualitative methodologies to seek their answers. It was inevitable that the EI, so constructed, would reveal outcomes that were quite subjective. The outcomes from each programme site, which were in the form of statements expressed by stakeholders, were also likely to have limited relevance across the sites.

Nonetheless, there was an opportunity to make adjustments. This was provided by periodic discussions among representatives of the programme teams, as well as between the coordination team and the programme teams.[2] These meetings often challenged the teams to take their investigations deeper and to find more accurate lenses to view their work.

For example, some of the teams started their investigations with plans merely to interview diverse stakeholders on their opinions of the effectiveness of their programmes. However, they were persuaded through the EI collective discussions to consider whether such interviews could provide a full perspective. By asking a stakeholder why a programme is effective (with no real certainty that it is effective according to the stakeholder), an enquirer will not necessarily learn how the programme functions, whether or under which circumstances and constraints it is effective, or the sorts of outcomes that determine effectiveness.

Moreover, while the individual programme teams were encouraged to allow the stakeholders to speak openly and in their own words, the participants in the collective discussions needed to be able to use words and concepts that were readily and mutually understandable. To facilitate this phase of the collaboration, new tools were developed to record, sort and represent the diverse learning.

A team began meeting to pull together the descriptions of processes, the presentations of findings, the general progress reports and various programme-specific reports in order to facilitate a cross-site interchange and the collection and joint exploration of the insights into

2 There were two international conferences, one in The Hague in November 1999, and the other in Caracas in December 2001. There were also five technical workshops among EI teams. These took place in The Hague (June 1999), Guatemala City, Guatemala (October 1999), Porto, Portugal (May 2000), Cartagena, Colombia (May 2001) and The Hague (June 2001).

effectiveness. The hope was that the lessons learned across the EI programmes could be recreated in a form that would benefit other partners and audiences and prove useful for other early childhood development programmes, as well as for policy-making.

COURTESY OF ALMAYA

Playing roles. . .

Some of the EI teams had decided to use the native language of the team members or of the programme communities in their investigations. This generated opportunities for the stakeholders to express abstract concepts in their own language. The use of the local languages during the application of the qualitative tools also allowed the teams properly to survey issues of importance to the programme participants and personnel. In several cases, this presented a complication when concepts had to be translated for analysis, since the languages of the programme target populations, the programme funding organisations, the insiders and outsiders on the EI teams and the coordinators in The Hague were all different. The amount of material in diverse languages, including the original raw data resulting from the enquiries among the stakeholders and the numerous reports, was vast.

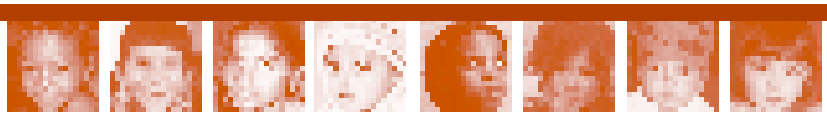
The idea of employing one's own language was nonetheless broadened to a commitment to try to remain true to the words of the programme experiences being investigated. Though this idea was consistent with the spirit of the EI, which required the team members to try to suppress their prejudices and preconceptions in favour of the views of the stakeholders, it meant using the words that come with the data and writing down precisely what people said, rather than summarising or reducing to jargon. If someone talked about a programme 'carrying on', the conscious effort had to be made not to translate this into the word 'sustainability'.

At the same time, however, a purposeful endeavour evolved to unpack concepts, to try to define the words and phrases used in the data and to telescope the circumstances and the contexts that gave rise to them into intelligible statements. As the programmes were scrutinised, there was a natural propensity to offset within the analysis the individual slants of the independent EI teams and to encourage clarity and promote uniformity at least in the grammar of the EI exploration.

One conclusion of the EI enquiry therefore seems to be that the understanding of a programme is related to the ability to stay true to the experience and the words of the programme stakeholders and the details of the history of the programme, but that one must still attempt to collect and distil meanings from these so that they can be communicated in ways more apt to provoke reflection. This process is full of contradictory tensions and challenges. However, it must be engaged if the 'meanings' learned through an enquiry such as the EI are to become useful in other contexts.

'Our team's [Israel] overall experience of the EI process has been both satisfying and frustrating. Locally, we have taken advantage of the methodological flexibility the EI afforded. At the same time, we have suffered from the lack of cohesive direction and collaboration that was a function of having ten separate country teams who also had the freedom to develop their own paths at their own pace. This has been most keenly felt through the desire for deeper cross-site work, an impulse that emerged at every large EI gathering . . . .'

– From Lipsky et al. (2002)



Epilogue: Other Contours of Effectiveness

This chapter lists general statements about ten possible attributes and sources of effectiveness condensed from the programme reports on the Effectiveness Initiative. Two potential spin-offs of effectiveness are also highlighted.

The effectiveness of programmes was not under evaluation in the Effectiveness Initiative. Indeed, the programmes were selected because their effectiveness had already been widely recognised. Rather, the goal was to discover what made the programmes effective. In other words, the objective was not to examine *whether* a programme was effective or to measure to *what extent* it was effective by assembling evidence on the basis of 'quantitative' indicators of, say, under-5 mortality rates or child growth and development. The objective was to learn *why* a programme was effective. Moreover, for various conceptual reasons related to a desire to enhance the involvement of programme beneficiaries and compensate for possible biases among the EI actors, it was decided from the outset to gather the evidence by plumbing the views of stakeholders through the application of numerous participatory tools.

Because of this 'qualitative' focus in the goal and the methods of the enquiry, it was always thought that it would be more accurate to speak of the EI not as a research effort to attempt to gain hard facts about effectiveness, but rather as an exploration aimed at 'mapping the contours' of effectiveness. It was expected that, by expressing the objective in this way, one could more easily aspire to round out the EI by recreating and communicating the lessons learned across the programmes in a form that would benefit other partners and audiences and, especially, prove useful for other early childhood development programmes, while nonetheless remaining true to the voices of the stakeholders, the great openness of the EI process and the diverse and environment-specific approaches employed by the teams.

The sets of statements about effectiveness in the list below are offered in this spirit. Each set consists of a key word or phrase followed by a brief description and citations. The key words or phrases and the citations have been collected directly from specific programme reports, where they have been indicated in an unambiguous manner as a characteristic of the effectiveness of the relevant programmes. Individual sentences within the descriptive paragraphs have also been pulled together and condensed from the relevant reports, although analysis has sometimes been added for the sake of clarity.

The reader should bear in mind that the features of effective practices that are described in the list are firmly grounded within the precise contexts of the programmes cited. While all the programmes may in some sense reflect all the statements about effectiveness in the list, the statements should not be considered universal truths about effectiveness, no matter how intuitively correct some of them may appear to be. For a better understanding of the contexts, for additional clarification on the meanings of the sets of statements within the list and for other insights into the contours of effectiveness, the reader is therefore encouraged to refer back to the relevant summary chapters.

Below are ten sets of general statements about effectiveness that one might distil from the EI.

1. The 'platform'

The 'platform' or environment of a programme is important. This includes the timing of the

initiative, the existence of receptive local and national government policies, a consciousness within the target community of its problems and needs and an ability among all concerned to recognise the long-term potential of the programme.

> *'Why was the project effective? . . . . [one reason was:] Because conditions were favourable.'*
>
> – Colombia (Myers et al., 2004, page 7)

> *'The starting point of effectiveness of any project is the . . . platform in which the project is initiated.'*
>
> – Kenya (Mwaura, 2003, page 3)

> *'The origins of what we call "Águeda's Movement" go back to the revolutionary period. That period was marked by an explosion of energy and initiatives from a civil society [within] a State whose goals were not yet well defined. Such a State looked for [orientation to] the emerging forces [in] society.'*
>
> – Portugal (d'Espiney et al., 2001, page 2)

2. The donor

The relationship between the programme and the donor should be properly defined at the start. It should be characterised by a friendly spirit of collaboration in the solution of duly identified problems and the satisfaction of the community needs that can be usefully addressed by the programme. It should be based on a common view of desired outcomes. The donation of funds should not be equated with an entitlement to apply authoritarian management practices. Though they cannot be meaningfully weighed on a financial scale, the time, effort, trust and openness of local stakeholders are also generous and substantial contributions to the success of a programme.

> *'In community programmes, the rules that govern the participation of community members in the election of managers or administrative boards should be set out in writing so as to guarantee proper functioning.'*
>
> – Honduras (CCF-H, 2002, page 33)

> *'The programme relationship with the donor is very important. . . . A [spirit of] friendly guidance [rather] than [a] supervisory relationship should be built between the funding agent and the programme. . . . AKF's role has been to share ideas . . . with us. . . . Also, they give us . . . technical advisory support directly. . . . [This] is also good for the pre-schools because it gives them confidence that people are concerned and recognise what they have accomplished.'*
>
> – Kenya (Mwaura, 2003, page 8)

3. The personnel

One major component of effectiveness is the steady contributions of the people working in a programme. This includes the people who introduce a programme into a target community and the people who support the programme with funds and other assistance.

That the commitment of the personnel can be more significant than the programme design in the achievements of a programme emerged repeatedly in the EI timelines. People who are intensely involved in a programme, who are willing to work long hours and who confront barriers and the needs of a target community with vigour, enthusiasm and selfless dedication can be the difference between failure and success even of a poorly planned and poorly organised project. Being an effective community worker or organiser also means being reliable and lending a helping hand in good times and bad. Such sentiments, as well as a spirit of unity, hard work and community service, should be reinforced as much as possible among the personnel, but also among the other stakeholders.

'In Ahmedabad, during the heavy rains and floods, the crèche workers kept the centres going. Children got food, shelter and medical care. . . . The aagewans, crèche teachers and mothers . . . distributed chlorine tablets, got disinfectants from the Municipal Corporation and organised clean-up drives in their neighbourhoods to prevent an epidemic. The team also assisted SEWA's insurance group to survey and assess flood-related damages in and around the centres.'

– India (Anandalakshmy et al., 2003, page 42)

'With regard to what constitutes "effective" childcare, there were several issues that came to light. Perhaps most important of all is the warmth, care and affection of the teachers . . . . Even years later, as our alumni profiles show, it is this that remains with the children. The love and support of the caregivers and teachers in the earliest years apparently [sustain] the children through subsequent years and into adulthood.'

– India (Anandalakshmy et al., 2003, pages 74-75)

'The staff and the programme community operate on the maxim that, at the end of the day, it is not what one has achieved for himself that is important, but what one has helped others to achieve. . . . a sense of mutual . . . responsibility and accountability to each other in . . . service delivery, which in turn creates a sense of self-motivation and a process of effectiveness.'

– Kenya (Mwaura, 2003, page 8)

'Every organisation is a product of how its members think and interact: It is the people in any organisation that make it work in the way it works. Directions, approaches, rules can change depending on the people who are in a particular organisation at a particular time. How do people within COLF . . . relate to partners: the Aeta families, the donor or funding partner DWHH, the local government officials? Can people within COLF express their views, or are only the opinions of the leaders heard? Can people disagree and explore different perspectives? How do they look at problems and solve them? Are they sincerely interested in contributing something significant for children and families in the future?'

– Philippines (de los Angeles-Bautista et al., 2002, page 71)

'What influenced me most were the people, their sharing, the exchange of experiences: it was a revelation.'

– Portugal (a 'witness' quoted in d'Espiney et al., 2001, page 5)

4. Adopting the needs and priorities of the community

Taking the time to study the overall social conditions of a target community so as to refine a programme approach is important. The priorities and needs of the community should be used to shape the priorities and direction of a programme. This can help ensure that a programme will at least fill the needs and meet the priorities of the community. According to a corollary, a programme that is unresponsive to a community's needs and priorities cannot be effective.

Staff should consider problems raised by stakeholders and beneficiaries, particularly if this occurs repeatedly, as signals that there may be unmet demands that require attention. Community workshops or other community fora (discussion groups among parents, for example) can be reliable sources of steady information on community needs and priorities and an efficient means to allow stakeholders the opportunity to provide input and release tensions. It should not be overlooked that people who are the target of a programme may understand quite precisely what they require for self-actualisation.

'Special emphasis was assigned to the necessity of undertaking the realisation of a diagnosis of the [target] community so as to understand community conditions and problems better. . . . The diagnosis would also serve as the baseline for an integrated process of investigation and the creation of a plan of development.'

– Colombia (Myers et al., 2004, page 17)

'A parents committee is in charge of identifying and evaluating . . . needs, defining objectives, establishing goals [so as] to include them in a workplan [that satisfies the] priority needs of children and their families. . . . Each community defines and prepares its "project" based on the children's needs for development . . . .'

– Honduras (CCF-H, 2002, page 6)

'Another of the "lessons" was that an approach to childcare [that] identifies and then builds on the local communities and especially [the needs] of women is more likely to be "effective". Thus, if women go out to work in the fields early in the morning, then crèche [hours] have to be arranged accordingly. Or if salt workers spend eight months of the year in the desert manufacturing salt, [then] centres . . . must be located there right next to the salt pans. So, the starting point for "effective" initiatives must be the needs of the children and their parents.'

– India (Anandalakshmy et al., 2003, page 75)

'Almaya is effective: they really work directly with the community, provide direct services to the community. This is different [from] other programmes for Ethiopians, where there is a political agenda.'

– Israel (a stakeholder cited in Lipsky et al., 2002, page 35)

'[The] MRC operational framework was based on the social conditions, strengths, values and expressed needs of the community. Commissioned studies were [carried out] to delineate the contextual variables in which the problem of education [that] was expressed by the communities existed. These contextual variables then guided . . . the MRC programme.'

– Kenya (Mwaura, 2003, page 4)

'A programme must view problems as issues and challenges that signal an unmet demand from the various stakeholders and beneficiaries and which require immediate attention. . . . Challenges are part of the [dynamics of] effectiveness . . . .'

– Kenya (Mwaura, 2003, page 8)

'The coordinators think the programme is effective when it satisfies a need of the community, is low cost [and] reaches its objectives and [when] the service it supplies is appropriate to the milieu in which the children and their families are living.'

– Peru (Vásquez de Velasco et al., 2003, page 19)

'Before, we used to do slash-and-burn farming or work as hired farm labourers for others. But, now, our family has our own livelihood projects. When we were not yet part of COLF*, we had no capital, so we borrowed money from lenders even if the interest rates were so high. Now, because of the livelihood projects of* COLF*, we own our harvest, and we can pay our loans from the livelihood project.'*

– Philippines ('Francing', quoted in de los Angeles-Bautista et al., 2002, page 58)

'A first survey of children with disabilities in the municipality was done in 1976; a second survey was done in 1977/78 [and was] followed, in 1979, by a survey of adults with disabilities. The goal was to understand the situation of these persons . . . . The successive surveys presented . . . the dramatic lives led by some disabled persons. People who were to work for Bela Vista were introduced to reality.'

– Portugal (d'Espiney et al., 2001, page 4)

5. Culture and tradition should be taken into account

Culture and tradition govern some aspects of the relationship between parents and children, including routine feeding patterns, choices between the behaviours that are tolerated and those that are punished, and household economic management. The culture and traditions of a community should not be ignored by an early childhood programme. Approaches that represent innovations in a community should be applied in such a way so as to incorporate cultural and traditional practices as much as possible.

'Within the communities are cultural patterns that, although they limit the child's full development, cannot be ignored when introducing an [early childhood development] programme. Some examples are: the nature of the relationships between parents and children, habits and patterns in eating, differences between tolerance and discipline [and] household economic management.'

– Honduras (CCF-H, 2002, page 27)

*'*SEWA *wanted the children to experience the joy of learning, to value their environment and traditions and to explore the world around them. What was needed therefore, in addition to the basic aspects, was the enrichment of creative child development activities geared to the reality of the working class and designed to enthuse the children to learn.'*

– India (Anandalakshmy et al., 2003, page 20)

'A key area of centre activity was the development of new and the upgrading of [existing] educational materials, integrating Ethiopian cultural themes and motifs with Israeli ones. . . . [S]ignificant progress was made in the production of innovative and attractive educational materials . . . by including new elements, such as the use of the Amharic and Tigrinya languages, together with Hebrew.'

– Israel (Lipsky et al., 2002, page 26)

'Most organisations treat immigrants as people who must forget everything they know . . . and learn everything all over again. Almaya treats immigrants as whole people. Roots have to be strengthened, and whatever people want to preserve must be preserved . . . . You go into a community, understand its workings, and, using that as your starting point, accompany them to a place that will be more comfortable . . . .'

– Israel (Lipsky et al., 2002, page 39)

'. . . family groupings were integral to the social organisation and the life of the Aetas. So, the home-based programme . . . and the parent education programme were anchored on these family [groupings]. When the livelihood component was introduced . . . , it was also evident . . . that the clan or extended family grouping had to be [the] basis for any community organisation . . . .'

– Philippines (de los Angeles-Bautista et al., 2002, page 14)

6. Checks and balances, monitoring and evaluation

It is important to plan for and implement appropriate management schemes and quality controls. A programme might be organised so as to create a positive sense of competition among component activities, for instance. Such competition could act as an incentive to achievement and also as a system of checks and balances. Mutual support and accountability create a sense of responsibility towards the success of a programme. Problems and progress should be discussed openly at frequent meetings among stakeholders. This would also help ensure that experiences and innovations are shared. Likewise, simple but comprehensive structures for research and for monitoring and evaluation should be put in place. These structures should take into consideration all the beneficiaries and stakeholders and provide pathways to receive stakeholder feedback. The capacity of staff to receive and properly assess this feedback must be built up. One measure of effectiveness may be the extent to which a programme can make adjustments to take advantage of positive openings or turn crisis into opportunity.

'One should not expect to avoid error, but, rather, [seek] to recognise it and understand it as a path to learning.'

– Colombia (Myers et al., 2004, page 41)

'A simple but comprehensive system of monitoring and evaluation . . . and [a] feedback system that takes into account all the dimensions and elements of the operations and all the beneficiaries and stakeholders at all levels should be put in place. This system must include the stakeholders' assessment[s] and must be seen as a capacity-building and development activity . . . .

'[The] Madrasa Resource Centre . . . programme places a very high premium on [an]

effective and participatory process of assessment, monitoring, evaluation and research . . . . This has enabled the MRC staff to make effective planning and operational decisions. . . . [The system] has contributed [to] placing ownership of the programme [within] the community . . . .

'There are regular meeting at all levels. At regional level once a year and as many meeting[s] as possible at country level by the national boards . . . .'

– Kenya (Mwaura, 2003, page 7)

7. Insiders and outsiders

In several instances, the programmes employed in their routine operations some personnel who were 'insiders' and others who were 'outsiders' with respect to the target populations. These programmes were thereby attempting to tailor their approaches to tap into the perceived advantages and avoid the disadvantages of reliance on only one or the other sort of personnel.

The members of the target populations and other stakeholders sometimes spoke of a tension between the advantages and disadvantages of this use of both insiders and outsiders by a programme. Thus, some stakeholders mentioned that insiders 'understand' the traditions and the needs of the target population. Insiders may act as important mediators between the community and the programme. The insiders may be more likely to communicate well with other local stakeholders. A positive attitude among insiders towards a programme can therefore play an important role in the success of the programme.

Meanwhile, outsiders are generally more well prepared, according to some stakeholders. It may be tremendously difficult to find qualified insiders or train them properly as staffers, while qualified outsiders are usually readily available. Insiders may show limited initiative and poor long-term planning capabilities. The community may feel it can exert more control over the work of insiders. Insiders may not be able easily to gain acceptance as figures of authority.

Some of the stakeholders who expressed these opinions were probably not entirely unbiased. Nonetheless, the perceptions among a target population concerning the benefits or drawbacks of the use of insiders and outsiders may influence the effectiveness of a programme. If mothers find warmth and a caring attitude among the insiders who are their points of contact with a programme, or if they find competence and professionalism among the outsiders, then their relationship with the programme is more likely to be positive even if their perceptions about the insiders and outsiders are due to bias.

A model for the use of insiders and outsiders suggests itself. If the outsiders are resented by a community, then insiders should be encouraged to join the staff in some capacity. If the insiders are criticised because they are considered less skilled, then they should be offered more training, and outsiders might be brought in to supervise the technical aspects of their work.

Some of the programmes examined here have undertaken such steps. In Israel, for example, an Ethiopian paraprofessional (an 'insider' with respect to the Beta Israel immigrant community) was typically paired with a local non-Ethiopian Israeli professional social worker (an 'outsider' with respect to the Beta Israel) to run early childhood programme components of Almaya. In this 'dyad', the Israeli professional guided the technical aspects of the Ethiopian paraprofessional's work in filling the needs of the community, while the Ethiopian provided her non-Ethiopian counterpart with expertise on the issues of the culture and the values

of the target community. The sensitivity of the professional towards the community and the technical abilities of the paraprofessional were both enhanced to the benefit of the community and the programme.

The EI also drew on insiders and outsiders, in this case with respect to the programmes. This had an immediate, positive impact on most of the programmes because it established a process that allowed the programme stakeholders to reflect on their work through an exchange with EI people who were outside the programmes. The use of a combination of insiders and outsiders helped fix the EI positively within the programmes. It also assisted the EI teams in recognising 'rose-coloured glasses', 'sacred cows' and other filters with great clarity and in devising creative ways of working with and around them. This helped enhance the effectiveness of the programmes.

The reliance on programme insiders and outsiders in the composition of the EI teams led to a curious result, the implications of which were perhaps not properly appreciated at the outset. Because several of the programmes being explored used personnel who were insiders and outsiders with respect to the target populations, while the EI teams used insiders and outsiders with respect to the programmes, the interactions among the EI, the programme and the target population generated several layers in an insider-outsider 'constellation'. (See the table.) These layers sometimes complicated the difficulties associated with insiders and outsiders.

An Example of an Insider-Outsider Constellation: EI and Almaya in Israel

	Composition	
	EI Team	Almaya Dyad
Non-Israeli	programme outsider	
Non-Ethiopian Israeli	programme insider	community outsider
Beta Israel immigrant		community insider

Note: For the EI team, the table shows the situation after Almaya was restructured and therefore before the team had drafted its report. See Chapter 4.

'Differences between CINDE and the Teresitas surfaced about how developmental projects should be conceived and run. . . . The positive side of this recognition and divorce [of Promesa from the Teresitas] was that . . . it facilitated thinking about . . . a path much more consistent with the participatory . . . nature of the project . . . .

'Thus, the project reinforced its participative character by putting into the hands of the "madres asistentes" the responsibility held by the nuns. This was a moment of crisis given that these "madres asistentes", now in the role of promotoras, had not gained the recognition and prestige that the nuns had gained [in the communities]. Yet, the training [they had] received during those first years and their experience working beside the nuns proved to be productive, since . . . , with time, they earned the . . . respect of the communities . . . .'

– Colombia (Myers et al., 2004, page 30)

'Programmes addressed at communities will more likely be successful if they are led by community members who respect local traditions, share local interests, use the same language and remain longer in the community.'

– Honduras (CCF-H, 2002, page 37)

'. . . having crèche workers (teachers) from the same communities . . . contributed enormously to the "effectiveness" of the programme. Not only do mothers feel comfortable leaving their children with women they know, but the teachers empathise with the children naturally and without self-consciousness.'

– India (Anandalakshmy et al., 2003, page 75)

'The "dyads" – or working teams of professionals and . . . ethnic paraprofessional[s] – [are] tied to Almaya's effectiveness. [The] teams operate by equalising the two kinds of knowledge each partner brings to their work: the so-called "universal" (Western) knowledge of the professionals and the cultural knowledge of the paraprofessionals. In training, the need is emphasised for both types of knowledge (cultural and professional). Coursework is also delivered to both professionals and paraprofessionals together and thus [transmits] the message of the equal importance of both. This diffuses some of the hierarchical tensions between the professionals and the paraprofessionals [and] aids in the professionals' recognition and sensitisation to community needs and understanding. The dyad members formulate a new body of cross-cultural knowledge.'

– Israel (Lipsky et al., 2002, page 39)

'. . . the outsiders [with respect to the programme who were on the EI team] often queried basic assumptions, . . . and provoked careful examination of generally accepted wisdom and beliefs. They were also able to carry out interviews that might have been less candid had project insiders carried them out. It has . . . been reported that having international members on the team added some sense of importance to the project in the eyes of the Ethiopian community.'

– Israel (Lipsky et al., 2002, pages 51-52)

'Many [parents in the programme] believe it is important that the animadores should be from the communities in which they work, given the intimate cultural ties and the knowledge they possess of the needs of the community. In contrast, others would prefer that [the animadores] come from outside because this is seen by the community as [an indication of] an improvement in quality.'

– Peru (Vásquez de Velasco et al., 2003, page 91)

'. . . COLF decided that it would be best to recruit more staff members from [Tarlac and Zambales] – ideally even community residents who spoke the dialects – and train them to be . . . community-based child development workers. . . . The fact that they were residents of the two communities or neighbouring villages meant that they would be accessible to the [Aeta] partners. . . . They are the parents who would eventually be the child development workers responsible for the home-based programme when COLF phases out of the two communities.'

– Philippines (de los Angeles-Bautista et al., 2002, pages 59-60)

8. Empowerment

The empowerment of a programme's target population through training for local people so they can perform key functions in programme interventions can help engage the energy and commitment of the target population in support of the programme. Moreover, it provides the programme with personnel – the people themselves – who are able to offer expert advice on the needs and priorities of the target population and who can speak in favour of the

programme among their close contacts in the local community.

If a programme adopts an organisational policy of sharing responsibility for the programme with a community, this will help push the community to become more active in the programme. Programmes that assign responsibility to community members stimulate their initiative and encourage their commitment in the solution of community problems. By discovering their ability to find solutions to their own problems, the community members legitimise their potential in their own eyes. Thus, a programme can represent an opportunity to recover the natural talents of community members. Empowerment conducted in this way represents a fairly direct, hands-on means to build capacity among a target population and also ensure some measure of endurance of a programme after the outsiders leave.

Empowerment can be achieved more indirectly through, for example, the provision of childcare services so that mothers can earn income and thereby gain more decision-making authority in the household. The provision of childcare can also free up older daughters from childcare duties so that they can attend school.

A problem encountered in many of the programmes was the perception among men that there was a preferential orientation in the programme towards women to the exclusion of the men. It must be admitted that early childhood programmes do tend to concentrate on mothers as the principal providers in the family of the nurturing environment for young children. Moreover, women are often more likely to become involved in community social work and non-formal education initiatives. Because of this rather natural slant, it may be worthwhile to establish programme interventions that can appeal to men and can encourage them to become active in the education and development of their children especially in ways that are pertinent to the accepted roles of fathers in the community.

'The mothers who passed through the various programmes spoke of their progress in the way they were raising their children, especially in terms of showing affection, meting out punishment and caring for health and hygiene. However, . . . they also had the possibility to attain [more] formal education, participate in the organisation of Promesa [and] . . . in the development of their communities in different ways, all of which meant that, within their families [and] before their spouses and communities in general, they were being seen in a new light . . . .'

– Colombia (Myers et al., 2004, page 7)

'An organisational policy of sharing the responsibility for the management of project funds helps the community become involved and assume an active role in the implementation of the programme. The parents committee has authority to register signatures at the banks where payments are made, to make payments and purchases and to offer incentives to the madres guías.'

– Honduras (CCF-H, 2002, page 30)

'While their babies were in SEWA crèches, the mothers could take up full-time work. This increase in working hours was reflected in better food for the family. . . . There was also an improvement in the children's health. [Because] the paramedical workers in the crèches [got] the children immunised against communicable diseases and [could detect] a child's illness at the very early stages, the number of children who needed to be referred to a doctor went down substantially.'

– India (Anandalakshmy et al., 2003, pages 11-12)

'The madrichot cited their contributions to the community as important. Their work as madrichot also reconnected them to their own community in a different position: as women [who] know and can provide knowledge.'

– Israel (Lipsky et al., 2002, page 49)

'. . . the [focus] was on the creation of a free space for the mothers so they could improve their skills and thereby enhance the socio-economic well-being of their families, not on the need for childcare. It was only later . . . that the child became the focus [of the programme].'

– Peru (Vásquez de Velasco et al., 2003, page 22)

'Within the context of broad community development efforts, successful transitions to community responsibility and ownership for . . . development projects . . . always [hinge on] the emergence and effective preparation of grass-roots community leaders. . . . But what is certain is that they will have to earn the trust and respect of the other parents in their own community as "leaders" in relation to the . . . programme. . . . In addition, they will have to nurture and sustain collaborative efforts among the families in their own sitios [localities]. . . .'

– Philippines (de los Angeles-Bautista et al., 2002, page 66)

'One of the problems that Thelma [a local volunteer] considered a pressing one for her sitio was the lack of a source of clean potable water, [and this] adversely affected the children's health. Thelma wrote a letter to the mayor of Botolan town to ask for two water pumps for their sitio. She followed this up personally with the mayor's office, and, when she finally had a chance to talk to [the mayor], she introduced herself as a "PA" [parent-apprentice teacher] from COLF and told him about the living conditions of the residents in their sitio. She explained how too many children were frequently sick because of the lack of clean water. That same week, the mayor approved the purchase of two water pumps for their sitio.'

– Philippines (de los Angeles-Bautista et al., 2002, page 69)

9. The supply of expert assistance

The establishment of a vibrant system to supply the assistance of appropriate experts on a regular basis to programme centres can enhance the ability of these centres to reach target populations effectively. When the centres implement the changes or incorporate the new ideas of the experts, other people in the community witness the example and may be inspired to follow suit. This can become another means of building local capacity.

'In 1997, SEWA set up a childcare technical team to access [the latest] knowledge and skills in childcare and child development and to transmit them to the workers in the field. The technical team has 24 members: representative "aagewans", crèche teachers, supervisors and coordinators from all the districts where SEWA childcare activities are carried out. The monthly technical team meetings serve as a forum to learn from each other, share experiences and test out new ideas. What is learnt is then discussed at the monthly meeting with the larger group of childcare "aagewans", teachers and supervisors, not all of whom are present in the monthly team meeting.

'Child development experts, nutritionists, paediatricians, as well as people with skill and experience in working with children with special needs are invited to this forum. Thus, a cross-section of SEWA's childcare team has the opportunity to learn and implement different approaches to holistic child development. When the crèche teachers and "aagewans" actually effect changes or incorporate new ideas, others in the district also get inspired and [become] encouraged to do [the same]. There is, therefore, a sort of ripple effect.'

– India (Anandalakshmy et al., 2003, pages 23-24)

'A programme of at-home support . . . [was] started experimentally by educators in Bela Vista and was taken over by the . . . special education [team] of Águeda . . . ([formed by the] Education Ministry) created in September 1981. This team provided for the integration of disabled children [in] kindergarten and [primary] school.'

– Portugal (d'Espiney et al., 2001, page 5)

10. Communication

Ample communication is an important ingredient of effectiveness. The existence of open, flexible channels of dialogue between programme organisers and community actors offers the opportunity to exchange useful messages. Discussion among mothers, fathers, children, teachers and civil and religious leaders promotes understanding and consensus. It helps link communities socially and encourages the recognition of work well done, thereby consolidating individual and collective achievement. The exchange of experiences, supported by good example, can become an efficient motivational strategy in encouraging participation in common efforts.

'Community activities started in 1978 with weekly meetings of groups of 25 mothers to show them how to stimulate the intellectual development of their pre-school children from 3 to 7 years of age [by] using educational toys and games. . . . The original idea was to meet with a group every week for six months and, after that, to have occasional meetings . . . . This plan did not work because the mothers wanted to continue to meet on a regular basis. . . . The schedule of the meetings and how long a person attended became more flexible, with some mothers attending all three meetings during the same week.

'During these meetings the parents also discussed other problems, such as malaria and the health of their children. These discussions were the beginning of other, more general community projects, which included the fight [against] malaria [and] projects to build latrines, to obtain safe drinking water and to dispose of garbage.'

– Colombia (Myers et al., 2004, pages 17-18)

'The multiplier effect . . . is triggered through the . . . programme . . . because the persons involved perceive . . . the concrete results arising from participation, effort and the abilities of all. Communication acts to strengthen [these] transformations . . . . The exchange . . . of experiences . . . is useful in linking communities . . . and in encouraging the recognition of the value of the work of all actors.'

– Honduras (CCF-H, 2002, page 30)

'We were present in several settings within a community. We were at the school, the kindergarten, the home, the health care unit; I also worked in the health care unit. We

knew almost all the families with problems, and it was easy to pull the people together because we knew how to tie up [all] the loose ends. I had a community group in Casa do Povo, and people came there to talk to me.'

– Portugal (a 'zone element' quoted in d'Espiney et al., 2001, page 7)

Two potential spin-offs of effectiveness were also revealed through the EI.

11. Advocacy

If a programme becomes widely recognised because it is effective, it can turn this recognition into an opportunity to push for appropriate policy measures on a wider scale. Local and national government authorities have shown a willingness to learn from the experiences of successful programmes. A positive outcome in such an advocacy effort can advance the influence and the prestige of a programme and open the way to greater accomplishments and greater effectiveness.

Advocacy in early childhood development involves more than the influence on policy, however. It also covers actions that enhance the quality and increase the amount of care children receive. Social mobilisation is advocacy that activates people to become engaged in the well-being of others in new, more sustainable ways.

*'*SEWA*'s partnership in childcare with the Government . . . has given* SEWA *the space to share ground-level experiences and push for policy changes in early childhood care and education at national level. . . .*

'A major opportunity for policy action arose in 1987 when SEWA*'s founder and then general secretary, Ela Bhatt, was appointed chairperson of the National Commission for Self-Employed and Informal Workers. Visiting all the states, Ela Bhatt and the commission's other members . . . met with thousands of women workers across the country. Childcare emerged as a common and urgent need of all poor women. [Women] stressed that it was impossible for them to emerge from poverty without childcare. They saw it as an essential economic intervention for poverty alleviation, along with its [role as] a critical service for their children.*

'In 1988, Ela Bhatt and the other members presented the commission's report, "Shramshakti" (or "Labour Power"), to . . . Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. For the first time, the needs, struggles and enormous economic contribution of the poorest of workers in India were spelt out. The report also contains a detailed, constructive plan of action [within] which childcare is a prominent component. Shramshakti was a path-breaking report: the recommendations of 1988 are relevant even today for the discussion on effectiveness in childcare.'

– India (Anandalakshmy et al., 2003, pages 71-72)

'Most of the countries in the region have only recently started to formulate [early childhood development] policies, and the Madrasa Resource Centres, as well as AKF*, are being consulted on a regular basis and participate actively in this process [by] helping to formulate . . . guidelines, [providing] curriculum and training models, and participation [at] various meetings and workshops.'*

– Kenya (Mwaura, 2003, page 14)

'It is not surprising . . . that Águeda [became] "fashionable". During 1981, . . . "Águeda's Experiment", by this time already referred to as "Águeda's Movement", was presented to meetings and congresses all over the country. Schools for . . . teachers, nurses and social service [workers] asked to have groups of trainees received in Águeda. Groups appearing in many cities, still searching [for] ways to organise to meet the needs of disabled children, asked for Águeda's assistance. . . .'

– Portugal (d'Espiney et al., 2001, page 6)

12. Sustainability

The sustainability of a programme is not determined so much by financial or material resources as by the programme's global concept of human development, including training opportunities, community participation and the commitment of the beneficiaries. A sustainable programme is one that succeeds in becoming part of the lives of the protagonists.

'. . . sustainability may be . . . located more [within] the people [rather] than in the structures or the administrative process, even though these are also important . . . .'

– Colombia (Myers et al., 2004, page 40)

'Programme activities are directed at achieving a change in attitude and greater awareness, particularly among the fathers and mothers in families and among the communities more generally. Through this approach, the heart of the programme becomes part, forever, of the lives of the protagonists.'

– Honduras (CCF-H, 2002, page 28)

'The madres guías are the core of the programme. They transfer the knowledge they acquire to their oldest daughters. Some of [the madres guías] are grandmothers, and they use their knowledge in raising their grandchildren. This creates a multiplier effect within the programme.'

– Honduras (CCF-H, 2002, page 29)

'At first, I really didn't understand what it was all about, but I told my children, go ahead; just attend anyway: the [meals are] free, [and], at the same time, you'll learn. But, in the past years, I've been thinking: I did not complete my own schooling; my wife also did not go to school. Even if I break my back working [on] the farm, if I don't make sure my children study and learn, . . . they will also become farmers. But life is very different now . . . , really different, not like before, when you just [needed] a small piece of land [to] plant sweet potatoes, rice and vegetables [to] survive. . . . [N]ow, you need to learn everything because we're already [living] here in the plain [among the lowlanders].'

– Philippines ('Johnny', quoted in de los Angeles-Bautista et al., 2002, page 14)

'In [the workplace], the members of the group felt that their lives were different [because] they had been members of the group . . . .'

– Portugal (Ribeiro de Lima, quoted in d'Espiney et al., 2001, page 13)

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Information on the Effectiveness Initiative

Information about the Effectiveness Initiative, including downloadable documents, is available at the website of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, <*www.bernardvanleer.org*>. See, for example, the series *Early Childhood Matters* (click on 'Publications'), especially the following.

Bernard van Leer Foundation (2000), 'The Effectiveness Initiative: Creating an Environment for Learning', *Early Childhood Matters,* No. 96 (October), Bernard van Leer Foundation: The Hague.

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References for the reports that have been produced by individual Effectiveness Initiative teams on eight early childhood development programmes in as many countries and that have been used extensively in this book are listed here below. (They are also cited among the 'Other Resources' hereafter.)

Colombia: Myers, Robert G., Marta Arango, Glendon P. Nimnicht, Alejandro Acosta Ayerbe, Arelys Moreno de Yánez and Fernando Peñaranda Correa (2004), 'El Caso de Colombia: Promesa' ('The Case of Colombia: Promesa'), March, International Centre for Education and Human Development and the Bernard van Leer Foundation: The Hague.

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'Following Footsteps' Tracer Studies

Under the auspices of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, tracer studies were conducted among some of the programmes and in some of the countries involved in the EI. The studies formed part of 'Following Footsteps', a pilot programme initiated by the Foundation in 1998 that explored the effects over a period of from three to twenty years of a selection of early childhood programmes on children, adolescents, parents, teachers and others who had taken part. An overview of 'Following Footsteps' can be found in:

Cohen, Ruth N. (2004), 'Introducing Tracer Studies: Guidelines for Implementing Tracer Studies in Early Childhood Programmes', Bernard van Leer Foundation: The Hague.

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