

CHAPTER 9: *A RETROSPECTIVE VIEW: HOW HARD IT IS TO GET IT RIGHT*

Reviewing international assistance through the prism of my personal experiences, I have had to learn — and then to learn to accept — that in all probability we will never get it *completely* right. With sustained effort, better understanding of others' cultures, and continued evaluation of experience, we will slowly learn to get it *more* right.

It is daunting to realize how extraordinarily difficult it is to assist people to improve their life situation; assistance which will, in fact, help achieve the primary goals of international aid: to reduce poverty, advance education, improve health, elevate the status of women, strengthen democracy, and protect the natural environment.

THE INSEPARABLE WEB OF CONCERNS

All such overarching social concerns are inextricably interconnected. Efforts to improve one of them rely on advancement of the others. Logic would appear to dictate, therefore, that the approach to the improvement of the life situation of those in a disadvantaged city, region, or country, requires a strategy which, in some manner and to some degree, addresses the other dominant areas of concern. This thought lay behind the URBE program in Panama, the multi-faceted approach designed in the mid-1970s to advance the western region of that country. Ultimately, however, the welter of components included in the development program created an administrative nightmare, and the effort foundered. Although, significantly, those few parts of the program which involved strong local support and participation did not fail.

Determining those critical elements that create and sustain a troubled social situation has proven to be excruciatingly difficult. Getting agreement on these

elements, and then on the manner in which to address them, is even more difficult. The difficulties are clearly seen; as, for example, in the continuing effort to deal with the catastrophic turmoil that persists within the Darien rain forests of Colombia.

Naturalist Sam Bingham in his book, *The Last Ranch: A Colorado Community and the Coming Desert*, describes similar difficulties in trying to avert disaster from overtaking one of the major regions of the United States. 1/ He deals with one aspect of America's troubled environment: the efforts of local cattle ranchers and various government agencies to save the grasslands of Southwest Colorado from desertification, and, in the process, preserve the way of life of the region. One after another, development schemes are hatched based on the generations-long experiences of the local people, on the historical overview of federal bureaucracies, on the entrepreneurial fervor of major corporations, and on the insights of gurus whose expertise has been honed in Sub-Saharan Africa. Unfortunately, major difficulties accompany the involvement of every group or organization. Local memories of the past are inexact and contradictory as to how much grass of what particular strains prospered best, under what conditions, during which periods of the different seasons. Cultural attitudes and perceptions inhibit adoption of improved methods for herding cattle, ranchers from collaborating effectively with farmers, and locals with experimenting with strategies derived from Third World experiences. Organizational memories of governmental agencies are virtually nonexistent. When such memory does exist the questions for which answers are available are no longer relevant. Corporate investors are mainly interested in the huge profits to be made from the recovery and sale of water from the area's aquifers — unfortunately, not to the increasingly impoverished locals, but rather to metropolises hundreds of miles away.

Few, if any, development efforts, either abroad or at home, address simple linear problems — if this, then this, then that — rather they affect a broad range of interlocking concerns and actors. Such efforts in the less developed nations are, by definition, more complex, more time consuming, and, in every respect, less exact. There is less sure knowledge, fewer financial and trained human resources, and, often, more actors to incorporate into the task. It is the recognition of these

conditions, and the efforts to deal with them, that make development efforts so frustratingly difficult. In the end, it forces acceptance that, even under the best of circumstances, there are no quick fixes. Only carefully evaluated experience over considerable periods of time can lead to more exacting and effective approaches.

Difficult as it is to accept, the reality is that after a half century's effort the great majority of people in the less developed countries are still struggling to raise themselves from situations of desperation. In an address to the World Affairs Forum in February of 1996, the administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, James Speth, stated that:

"Contrary to some hopeful claims, much of the developing world is not 'making it'. . . Some 1.5 billion people live in poverty in UNDP's 173 programme countries. The living conditions for twice that number are deplorable. Each year, 13 to 18 million people — mostly children — die from hunger and poverty-related causes. . . Poverty is in fact growing faster than population.

"Worst off are the 47 countries we call 'least developed.' With ten per cent of the world's population, they have but 0.1 per cent of the world's income. For over two decades, their per capita income, on average, has declined. Today, it stands at about \$350. Moreover, during the past decade, about half of the developing countries registered negative real per capita income growth." 2/

THE STATE-OF-THE-ART IS ALWAYS EVOLVING, ALWAYS INEXACT

Inherent in every element of a well thought out development effort are state-of-the-art considerations. Every component of a program is based on evolving concepts of "best practice" and probability.

Throughout the discussion of my experiences I frequently comment that I did not know something that is today common knowledge. While I almost as frequently express chagrin, I also realize that, even with the most learned, it is always the case. We live in the most dynamic age of man's history. Our information and information systems are producing new insights and professional perceptions on an almost daily basis. However, we are constrained to act upon what we know today and are dimly aware of about tomorrow. The day after tomorrow eludes us altogether.

Most people who are aware of the long-standing public efforts in the United States to promote housing for low- and middle-income families are conscious of the constantly evolving approaches. One stage of this development effort was reviewed in my discussion of the rise and fall of the urban renewal program in Puerto Rico. To this day, we continue to adopt new measures that seek to avoid previous errors and hold out the prospect for improving the housing situation for the country's low- and moderate-income families. Nevertheless, the vagaries of human culture continue to leave us far from our desired goals.

ECONOMIC THEORY IS NO PANACEA

The focal point of most development theories has been economics. Indeed, for a considerable time after World War II "development" meant "economic development." With the possible exception of public health, improvement in a nation's economy has been the social concern that has appeared to lend itself best to quantification and predictability. We have learned to model a country's economy, show the relationship of one economic sector to another, and track the economic effects of such government inventions as raising the prime interest rate. We have also learned, however, that, no matter how sophisticated our measurement tools, only to a very limited degree can we predict human behavior when viewed over time in different countries. Nations not only reflect wildly varying cultural differences, but they are also constantly subjected to the disturbing influences of political upheavals, massive migrations, environmental

catastrophes, and the vagaries of a world economy increasingly influenced by transnational corporate actions and capital flows.

Over the last several decades, we have moved from the concept of viewing economic development as progressing through a set series of evolutionary stages to the more sophisticated but realistic notion that there are multiple paths to the improvement of a society's well-being. Development efforts have to be chosen in a pragmatic, site-specific manner and evaluated on the basis of their contribution to a multitude of primary social concerns. We are also learning that, however you wish to label the action, progressive, centrist or conservative, if it appears to work, continue; if it does not, seek to correct it and move on. 3/

Part of the common wisdom of the past 50 years has been that a relatively small number of experts, principally economists, planners, and engineers, working together at the top rungs of government could plan and micro-manage national development. The regional planning movement and the accompanying creation of special development agencies controlled by the national government reflected this belief. To add to the view's general acceptance, it appealed to the controlling elites in the less developed countries as well as to the pride of those within the chosen professions. Most of all, the approach seemed to be do-able. One could get one's mind around it, could understand its working, could even diagram and graph it. Its only problem was it did not reflect reality and had to be abandoned.

The harsh intrusion of reality has to be just as damaging to the counter, and equally simplistic, argument that merely "freeing up the market" will result in the marked improvement in the life situation of the citizens of the Third World. How could it possibly be expected to do so in nations where the disparity in income, knowledge, control of resources, and political power are so wildly disparate? In no country, neither in the least nor most developed, has it been demonstrated that simple reliance on market forces will address such enduring social concerns as equity, environmental quality, and empowerment of the poor.

THE PERVASIVE PROBLEM OF AUTOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

A major impediment, perhaps *the* major impediment, to getting it right is the manner of governance in most of the less developed countries. Rhetoric to the contrary, the needs and aspirations of the great mass of the citizenry of these nations are given little voice. Political and economic decisions, and the largess that flows from them, travel from the top down, not from the bottom up. Latin America is as close as any major region of the less developed world to having free elections throughout, yet the autocratic manner in which the societies there operate is exemplified in the case studies as well as in the literature I have discussed. The insistence of the Mexican government that a small appendage of a state university administer a development program that encompassed an entire region of the country, primarily to advance the career of one or two individuals, would not stand scrutiny in an open society.

A signal characteristic of autocratic governance is its extreme inefficiency and, as a result, its ineffectiveness. The histories of such development agencies as FUNDACOMUN in Venezuela and CORPOURABA in Colombia where presidentially appointed directors summarily dismissed every member of the professional staff who had served during the previous administration, are illustrative of the devastating results of autocratic attitudes and behavior.

Effective governance in the less developed countries is further exacerbated by the extreme social cleavage between the economic haves and have-nots, between those who come from families who have prospered, principally in the mega-cities, and those who live in urban squalor or away from the main stream in a myriad small towns and rural areas. It is not inevitably social snobbery — their life experiences and perceptions are totally at variance. It was the reason why in Puerto Rico many of the young professionals in the housing authority knew little of the slums of the commonwealth; why in Venezuela, FUNDACOMUN was unable to extend aid to the smaller communities of the country; and why in Colombia CORPOURABA was hindered from working effectively in the rain forests of the Darien. In all of these instances, the professional staffs of critically

important development agencies were composed principally of university-educated urbanites totally removed from the lives and experiences of those whom they were expected to assist.

By definition, autocratic government is at best opaque. What it hides is not only incompetence but corruption, often on a mind-boggling scale. For Americans, Mexico immediately comes to mind. However, other equally egregious examples could easily be cited. India, located on the other side of the world, is one of the largest recipients of international assistance. It is also far from having the most autocratic government among the less developed nations. Yet Rajiv Gandhi, a former Prime Minister, who was assassinated while campaigning in 1991, once estimated that 85 per cent of all money meant for the poor of that country was stolen before it reached them. 4/

An especially complicating factor is that where autocratic attitudes dominate governance they are not only evidenced at the top-most rungs of society, they percolate through all levels of the society. In the less developed countries where private investment opportunities are few and land is often the dominant form of wealth, it is also the source of prestige and power. Those who had plantations in the Darien of Colombia — the world of novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez — were on vastly different life plateaus than the large groups of anonymous *machos* who worked the land. Such socio-economic distances are often aggravated by the militancy of the political processes. Indeed, in much of Latin America supporters of different political factions are called *militantes*, and they frequently behave ferociously.

Autocracy means lack of communication. The ability to speak out, express one's views, find commonality, and achieve consensus require confidence that those in more elevated positions listen and understand. I have had a development colleague go so far as to say to me, "Development *is* communication — at all levels, in all undertakings!" Autocracy is the opposite. It means innuendo, obsequiousness, division, and, ultimately, failure.

TRIBULATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL AID AGENCIES

The global aid programs launched in the 1950s had as their accompanying model the popular and effective efforts of America's Marshall Plan, whose goal was the resurrection of the economies of Western Europe from the devastation of World War II. The ravages left by the war were in part physical, often the destruction of outmoded infrastructure and buildings, and in part social, the elimination of authoritarian governments. Despite the enormous devastation and expenditure of lives, in most instances the war did not destroy the basic fabric of societies, nor the management skills and organizational abilities of the millions who did survive. In the countries of Western Europe financial grants of aid produced near miraculous results. Where major portions of cities, and at times even entire cities, had been leveled, manufacturing plants and communication networks were rebuilt to modern, efficient standards. Happily, and quite visibly, the economic results of the assistance efforts redounded to the benefit of the donors as well as to the recipients of the aid.

As colonial holdings of European nations were spun off in the aftermath of the war, the highly visible condition of poverty and degradation of the newly created nation-states presented an additional incentive for donor country largess. The combined need for massive infusions of capital in both Europe and the less developed world, principally for improved social infrastructure, was the raison d'etre for the creation of the World Bank, officially the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and its sister agency, the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The other great institution created in the aftermath of the upheavals of World War II was the UN, which gathered together a series of international bodies under a single, institutional umbrella. A legacy of the ill-fated League of Nations, where country participation was sparse and support minimal, the UN was born of the widely-recognized need for the world's nations, most particularly the dominant financial and military powers that emerged victorious from the war, to address collectively social conditions of such malignancy that they threatened international stability.

It is still the peace-keeping activities of the United Nations, including its assistance to the millions of refugees displaced by famines and the ravages of armed conflict, that are the most dramatic and publicized activities of the UN system and the center of most controversy. At the beginning of 1997, 25,000 "blue helmets" from 70 countries were working to help check destabilizing forces in 16 peace-keeping operations. 5/ Yet, contrary to popular opinion, the UN has no troops, no weaponry, and no military equipment of its own, and its assistance in the resolution of armed conflicts is determined solely by the member countries of the Security Council.

Largely removed from the public eye of the industrialized countries are the on-going labors of the United Nations to assist the less developed countries to improve the life situation of their citizens, principally through assisting with building the institutional capacity to help themselves. In its efforts the UN system annually provides about \$5 billion of aid. 6/ This takes the form principally of technical aid, but unlike the World Bank, chiefly through financial grants rather than loans.

The UN finds its greatest expression in the activities of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the system's main coordinating and funding agency for technical assistance. UNDP supports countries' efforts to deal with the social, economic and technological aspects of the world's major development concerns. Comparable to the World Bank, UNDP's influence in the provision of a stable and better world is infinitely greater than the dollar value of its effort.

In recent years both the World Bank and UNDP have been the object of stinging criticism by those who wish them well rather than ill. These well-wishers maintain that, after close to a half century of trying, these institutions ought to be able to get it right. 7/

In viewing the difficulties of the international aid agencies, it is important to recall that both the United Nations and the World Bank are mandated to deal with and through national governments; and their governing boards are composed of

representatives of these governments. The United States is the major financial contributor to the United Nations and the largest share holder of the World Bank. Consequently, the administrator of UNDP and the president of the Bank have, in effect, been Americans appointed by the president of the United States. While these appointments assist in giving the U.S. a powerful voice in the operations of both agencies, in no manner is it possible for either of these agencies to be significantly in advance of the thinking and wishes of the other member governments.

A significant aspect of the difficulties of the international aid agencies is the problem they encounter in rejecting proposals for assistance from governments when the principal objectives and general approach fall within formally approved guidelines. We saw this clearly in the instance of the regional development project in Northeast Mexico. Given the basic organization that the Mexican government insisted upon, the United Nations should not have approved the project. Having done so, it should have closed it down when it became clear that the project could not achieve its objectives. Mexico, however, is a large and influential country. How its economy advances has enormous repercussions on the rest of Latin America. Viewed from the vantage point of the donor community, it is important to vigorously promote Mexico's development even if this frequently involves accepting high risk proposals. Such, for example, was the gamble that the United States government took in 1995 when it unilaterally underwrote the stability of the Mexican economy with a \$20 billion loan to the Mexican government.

More criticism has been leveled at the World Bank than the United Nations because so much of the Bank's effort has involved the planning and financing of enormous infrastructure projects designed to underpin economic progress. The results have been highly visible and at times have produced severe environmental degradation, massive population displacement, and the accumulation by the host countries of overwhelming debt.

A good deal of adverse publicity has also centered on the unwieldy nature of the bureaucracy of the international aid agencies. However, my experience has

been that little of this criticism applies to either the UNDP or the World Bank. In the main, both are staffed with professionals of outstanding ability. In reviewing my activities, I am struck by how laudatory my comments are about my professional colleagues. From time to time, some Bank people have behaved with arrogance in the mistaken belief that the deference paid to them is a result of their innate qualities rather than a consequence of the money they represent. But they are few and a minor irritant.

When I worked in Kenya at the headquarters of UHCHS (Habitat) my closest colleagues came from China, Uganda, Poland, Italy, Kenya and the United States. Mix that grouping with those of a dozen other countries and it becomes obvious that the agency is going to need more complex procedures, more regulatory dos-and-don'ts than are normally found in a private or quasi-public organization of comparable size, which draws its personnel from a single country, and which is involved with the delivery of a few, clearly defined services.

My personal perception is that the bureaucratic problems of the international aid agencies that receive so much attention in the popular press are seldom due to the incompetence of the professional staff. Rather, when difficulties occur, it is due principally to directors who have risen to prominence in societies where political savvy is of paramount value and autocratic behavior the norm. Secondly, it derives from the Sisyphean challenge to the middle managers, drawn largely from the ranks of specialists, who are required to function efficiently in a complex, highly charged, multi-cultural milieu.

THE AID COMMUNITY AS WORLD-WIDE INFORMANT

Through all the travail, both the United Nations and the World Bank, and by extension the international aid community, remain the world's most important learning mechanisms for dealing with mankind's universal social concerns. In the process of learning through doing, analyzing and publishing the results, and redoing in a slightly different manner, we — all of us — gradually learn. So visible are the operations of the aid organizations within the developing nations

that no government, no matter how authoritarian and secretive it might wish to be, can obliterate the tracks of international aid. Nor, for its part, can the donor community, despite the fondest wishes of any of the participating nations, obliterate its tracks within the Third World.

Contrary to much criticism, both the United Nations and the World Bank are remarkably open and accessible and are in the process of becoming considerably more so. 8/ Over the years I found this opinion to be held by the great majority of my professional colleagues. From time to time the sentiment even finds expression within the print medium. *The Economist*, which included the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in its commentary, contended in 1994 that: "USAID and the World Bank are unusual (although their critics rarely admit as much) in their openness and in the rigor with which they try to evaluate what they do." 9/

Analyses of conditions in the less developed nations, along with reportage on the international efforts to improve them, pour forth from both the UN and World Bank. The flow is enormously informative about practical achievements and failures. In the scope of its concerns, the only rival to the annual *Human Development Report* of UNDP is *State of the World*, the annual report of the Worldwatch Institute which analyzes progress toward a sustainable society; and the latter draws extensively on United Nations and World Bank reports for its basic information.

The international forums that the UN sponsors attract tens of thousands of participants who converge from every corner of the globe. These well reported gatherings inform millions of people about such common concerns as protecting the natural environment, advancing the role of women in development, and improving the art of city building. In much the same manner, a formal address by the president of Mexico to the General Assembly of the UN respecting an economic concern of Mexico resonates not only in Mexico and among the UN delegates but throughout Latin America. The same occurs in Sub-Saharan Africa when the speaker is the president of South Africa or around the Pacific Rim when the speaker is the president of South Korea.

SUPPORTING CIVIL SOCIETY, NOT JUST THE ECONOMY

One of the principal lessons that the international aid community has learned is that for a nation's social concerns to be addressed effectively efforts have to be made to include all of its citizens, even the most disadvantaged, in the process. I personally experienced not only how necessary but also how frustratingly difficult it is to do this. Among the theoretical and operational difficulties that have to be addressed is the recognition that cultural differences — not simply among nations but within nations — matter greatly. Customs, attitudes and popular perceptions differ dramatically. One of the significant implications of this circumstance is that, in the contemplation and advancement of development efforts assisted by the donor community, the special insights and analytical approaches of many disciplines have to be brought into the process. The efforts of anthropologists, sociologists, and even psychologists, must be made to play in harmony with those of economists, planners and engineers. Practitioners of all these disciplines must work collaboratively with the numerous public and private groups affected by the development efforts. The collaboration must extend from initial creation of the conceptual framework, through the lengthy monitoring, evaluation and adjustment processes.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), particularly those which draw heavily upon volunteer support, are increasingly seen as crucial to the processes of development. I observed a growing awareness of this perception in the evolution of community improvement activities begun in the 1950s in Puerto Rico. Later, in Venezuela, I witnessed the importance of Peace Corps volunteers in aiding the incipient urban planning movement in that country.

The dramatic increase in the number and significance of NGOs at all levels of the international scene was brought home to me in 1991 when I attended the International Development Conference in Washington, D. C. This is a biennial event that for a number of years brought together a few hundred people involved with diplomatic issues to discuss development concerns. By the 1990s, however,

over a 1,000 persons were participating in the three day conference. Besides the usual groupings there were an enormous number and range of organizations based on voluntary, people-to-people collaboration. A list of a few of their names hints at the range of their interests: Trickle Up, Trees for the Future, Self-Help Handcrafts, InterAction, and Global Tomorrow Coalition. Reflective of this diversity were the major issues formally addressed: sustainable development, women in development, and education for development. 10/

The following year, 1992, Earth Summit, formally the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), was held in Rio de Janeiro. It has sometimes been referred to as a watershed event in the history of global environmentalism. It will just as surely be remembered as a signal of the new and expanded role of non-governmental organizations in development. While attendance was enormous with 35,000 official participants, 22,000 of them were registered for the Global Forum for NGO's. 11/

The broader more participatory approach that is required of development efforts also means smaller but greatly increased number of programs and projects, involving more personnel, spread over longer periods of time. It also means an increased number of disappointments and the application of more varied methods of evaluation. Robert Picciotto, Director of Operations Evaluation of the World Bank, expressed the interplay between increased participation, program failure and enhanced evaluation when he recently wrote, "Public protest and participation transform the energy of disappointment into reform when evaluation lends a hand." 12/

Because of the need for the processes of governance to become more inclusive, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1988 established a special program since grown to become the Management Development and Governance Division. As the name implies its primary responsibility is to work with governments, and increasingly with the collaboration of NGOs, in the design and implementation of processes that are participatory, transparent and accountable. The path selected is not easily negotiated, but it represents the direction in which UN assistance, based to a

major extent on experiences such as I have described, has determined to pursue. The approach stems from the growing perception that while strong, supportive government is necessary, ultimately success in addressing a nation's dominant social concerns emerges from a process of dialogue and interaction among all sectors of a nation's society. 13/

The broadened approach to confronting the basic concerns of civil society finds expression in such contemporary phraseology employed by the international community in the promotion of "community involvement", "participation and ownership", and "private sector development". However, it is best phrased, I believe, as "building democracy". In this context, the expanding role of NGOs may not represent the tidal wave of the future. In themselves they are no panacea, as they can present problems of accountability, of ambiguous and conflictive relationships, and, frequently, of doctrinaire advocacy. However, they most certainly represent a powerful wavelet in the global effort *to get it more right*.

DEVOLUTION OF POWER A MUST

Accompanying the growing discernment that grassroots involvement is critical to the development process, is renewed emphasis on the decentralization of government. Greater devolution of responsibilities onto state and local bodies, which are accountable to and accessible by their citizens, together with provision of the financial capability for properly executing these responsibilities, is central to empowering millions who today are excluded from the processes of governance. In the case of one of South America's most advanced countries, Venezuela, we saw that such empowerment is not easily achieved. Understandably, elites are loath to relinquish their custodianship of power. Subterfuges are used to give the appearance of greater inclusion when, in fact, the situation remains unchanged. A 1995 study prepared for USAID on the effectiveness of the increasing focus on public participation and democracy-building was forced to conclude that as yet, "Central governments have in actual fact devolved little real power — decentralization has been mainly rhetoric.

Second, where decentralization has occurred, benefits have largely been captured by local elites." 14/

Sufficient international publicity has attended recent efforts to extend democracy in such diverse situations as Russia, Yugoslavia, China, South Africa, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, and Sri Lanka, to demonstrate the long-term nature of the struggle for local empowerment. Promotion of grassroots democracy in nations accustomed to autocratic governance often results in increasing the competition among different social, ethnic and religious groups for privilege and status that boils over into armed conflict.

No matter how one makes the argument for the importance of empowering people — and with the many armed conflicts that are flaring up so are the arguments of dissenters — participation is the manner in which people learn how to deal with development concerns. It is through the experience of civic participation that one gains knowledge as to how to define social goals, gather adherents, negotiate consensus, deal constructively with victory, and recover from defeat. In the final analysis, it is not natural resources that make a country wealthy, although they can certainly help. Nor is it a strategic location, as important as this can be. Ultimately, it is the human resources that are the wealth of a nation. They alone create the improved instruments of production and a more equitable society.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR DEVELOPMENT

Implicit in the struggle to understand the goals of development and to achieve them is recognition that improving the capacity of the less developed nations to instruct their own citizenry is essential. Well-trained and motivated citizens are needed for the effective administration of public agencies and the operation of volunteer civic organizations, for the successful operation of small businesses and the provision of such allied services as credit unions and maintenance shops. The critical need for imparting the necessary attitudes and skills to manage these and a

myriad other activities is not training from the outside; rather it is the creation and gradual improvement of indigenous training capability.

The design and evaluation of training is complex and never ending. It involves numerous follow up efforts to determine whether what was learned is being applied, if it has in fact benefited the recipients of the training, if it is proving of assistance to colleagues, and if it is, in fact, improving efficiency, productivity, and organizational behavior. In order that progress towards national self-sufficiency in training is achieved, time, professional skill, and financial resources are required to undertake the evaluations and to feed the results back into the training cycles.

As with other development efforts, formidable obstacles are encountered in accomplishing the task. In order to generate interest in training, raise the prestige of teaching, and be able to finance training activities, it is necessary to demonstrate that training is an essential ingredient of successful development efforts.

Unfortunately, just at the time when the critical importance of training is being recognized by donor countries in their own societies, they are reducing their assistance to the less developed countries. As a consequence, the principal organs of international aid, such as the UN, are finding it increasingly difficult to help poorer countries expand and significantly improve their indigenous training capability.

SUSTAINING OUR NATURAL HABITAT

This narrative of my education in international development has not dealt with issues related to the deterioration of the natural environment to the extent I would have wished. Since my entry into the development field, concern for salvaging the environment has escalated to alarm. We have steadily improved our ability to examine more acutely and report more accurately on both the causes and results of environmental degradation. Through the news media, we witness great

numbers of people suffering needless deprivation and death, and we are made to understand with graphic clarity that depletion of our natural resources is a common cost we all share.

Currently, every major city I have catalogued in my journey, indeed, every major city where I have *ever* worked, is in deplorable condition — streets clogged with barely moving traffic, atmospheric contamination rivaling conditions of the Midland cities of Charles Dickens's era, social infrastructure and services in crisis, and a rising tide of families who live in ramshackle quarters amidst enveloping squalor. Such conditions exist throughout the less developed world, in the great cities of Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, the Asian Subcontinent, and the South Pacific.

One can expect the international resolve for confronting the great urban issues will remain high. Major urban centers lend themselves to observation and analysis, to the expression of organized outrage by elites, to researches carried out in major universities, and to the initiation, monitoring and evaluation of development efforts. Such is not the case, however, in the great semi-arid stretches of Northeast Mexico, the rain forests of the Darien regions of Colombia and Panama, the savannas of East Africa, or the coastal waters throughout the less developed world. To a major extent, such regions exist outside of the collective consciousness, and our ignorance remains profound.

According to a 1995 report in *Cultural Survival*, the lush forests of the Darien of Panama are rapidly disappearing, and its native peoples are in danger of cultural extinction. 15/ It is devilishly difficult to alert our collective consciousness to the fact that the destruction of the rain forests of the Darien through slash-and-burn agriculture, the operations of giant mining and lumber enterprises, and the construction of great throughways threaten not only the indigenous life of the region. By contributing to the growing amounts of carbon in the atmosphere, and interrupting a great north-south avian migratory passage, it threatens the well-being of us all. Similar situations, whose impacts cross national and regional boundaries, are increasing in both number and adverse effect. 16/

I was involved for a short time in the early-1980s with an effort to designate a major portion of the Sinai peninsula as an international peace sanctuary. It would remain a place for contemplation, hiking, and observation. As the site of Mount Sinai, the home of a still functioning sixth century Greek Orthodox monastery, and a major path to Mecca, the region holds special meaning for Christians, Jews and Moslems. It contains animal and plant life unique to the region; it is an integral part of one of the great migratory routes for birds passing between Eastern Europe and Southern Africa; and its coastal waters contain some of the most varied and colorful fish life and coral structures in the world. It is also a visual wonder, encompassing jagged hills, huge rock outcroppings, undulating sand drifts, and wadis so intimately carved they sometimes contain only a single, statuesque tree. The program offered a rare opportunity for Egyptian and Israeli collaboration to reach beyond themselves to embrace the world. With the projected assistance of the international community through the UN, it was a prospect of enormous potential. 17/

Then the calamitous assassination of President Anwar Sadat of Egypt threw matters into turmoil and destroyed the prospect. Several years later, *Time Magazine* published an essay by columnist Lance Morrow, "Trashing Mount Sinai" which described the result. 18/ It detailed the rapid conversion of the area into a gigantic tourist trap with organized bus trips, air fields, and hotels with plans for construction of villas, tourist villages, and shopping centers — and a cable car to carry tourists to the top of Mount Sinai.

Like the Sinai, untold numbers of possibilities for preserving and enriching the world's habitat are rapidly disappearing. Unfortunately, individually, we remain vaguely aware of only a very few of such lost opportunities.

THE OVERARCHING LESSON

Through my involvement with international development efforts, I learned that it is not just that we need the collective experience of the international aid

community, as exemplified by the activities of the United Nations and the World Bank; nor the gathering efforts of non-governmental organizations involving churches, unions and other voluntary associations, both domestic and international; nor the creation and growth of indigenous learning mechanisms. I learned that no group or country can solve the great issues of development alone. We are all together. We must persevere together, together examine our disappointments along with our successes, adjust, and little by little, together, learn to get it more right.

NOTES

1. Sam Bingham, *The Last Ranch: A Colorado Community and the Coming Desert*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1996).

2. "The U.S. and U.N.: Back to the Future". Presentation to the World Affairs Forum, of James Gustave Speth, Administrator, United Nations Development Programme, to the World Affairs Forum, Charleston, S.C., February 19, 1996. (New York: UNPD) p.1.

3. The concept of development as progressing through a series of clearly defined stages was, perhaps, best articulated by W.W. Rostow in his popular book, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960). The more current view, that development occurs in a more fluid and indeterminate manner and that development efforts must be chosen in a pragmatic manner, is set forth in a well written, informative series of essays in *Rethinking the Development Experience*, edited by MIT Professors Lloyd Rodwin and Donald Schon. (Washington: The Brookings Institution, and Cambridge: The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 1994).

4. John R. Burns, "India's Have-Nots Swamp the Party System" (*New York Times*, April 26, 1996.) p.12.

5. Sir John Weston, British ambassador to the United Nation, "Why American needs the UN", (*Boston Globe*, December 15, 1997) p.23.

6. Speth, "The U.S. and the U.N.", p.4.

7. Several well publicized criticisms of the World Bank are:

Hilary F. French, "Rebuilding the World Bank" in *State of the World 1994: A Worldwatch Institute Report on Progress Toward a Sustainable Society*. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1994).

Bruce Rich, *Mortgaging the Earth: The World Bank, Environmental Impoverishment, and the Crisis of Development*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994).

David C. Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World*. (West Hartford: Kumarian Press, Inc. and Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1995).

8. For those with a special interest in information available from the World Bank see *The World Bank Policy on Disclosure of Information*, available through its Public Information Center in Washington, D.C. (1995).

9. "The Kindness of Strangers" (*The Economist*, May 7, 1994). p. 19.

10. A summary of the proceedings of the bi-annual International Development Conferences, including that of 1991, is obtainable from: International Development Conference, Suite 1100, 1401 New York Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

11. Eric Carlson, "Earth Summit '92 and the American Planner," two-part series in *Interplan*, quarterly newsletter of the American Planning Association. (Summer/Fall, 1992).

12. Robert Picciotto, "Visibility and Disappointment: The New Role of Development Evaluation," Rodwin and Schon, *Rethinking Development*, p. 219.

13. The basis for the shift in emphasis by the UN is set forth in the "Report on the Workshop on Governance for Sustainable Development: 24-26 April, 1996," by the Management Development and Governance Division of UNDP.

14. Harry Blair, "Assessing Democratic Decentralization: A CDIE Concept Paper," *Cities International* (Vol.VIII, No.1, 1996). p.6.

15. Nicanor Gonzalez and colleagues, "Ethnographic in the Darien," *Cultural Survival*, (Winter, 1995).

16. A wide ranging and compelling book on the disruption of the environment as civic concern is the book by, by then Senator, Al Gore, *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1993).

17. (Cite project document for Sinai program)

18. Lance Morrow, "Trashing Mount Sinai," *Time* (March 19, 1990). p. 92.