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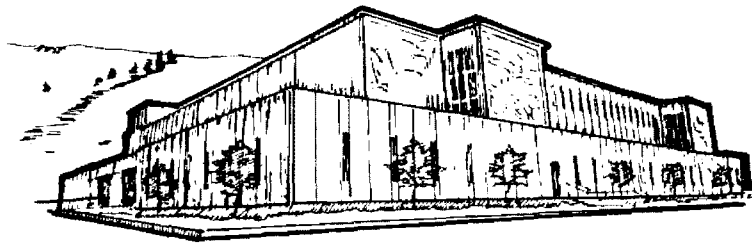
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BEYOND PATERNALISM:
BUILDING A PARTNERSHIP WITH THE POOR FARMER
IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

(Thoughts on the Honduran Experience)

by

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B. Sc., The University of California, Irvine, 1987

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

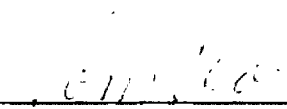
for the degree of

Master of Science

The University of Montana

1993

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Dean, Graduate School

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DEDICATION

Dedico humildemente este trabajo a la memoria de mi tía Paquita, Ing. Francisca A. Aguilar de Escoto, que consagró su vida a mejorar la vida de los pobres de su país. Ella ha sido y será siempre una fuente de inspiración para mí.

I humbly dedicate this work to the memory of my aunt Francisca A. Aguilar de Escoto, *Paquita*, who devoted her life to improve the lives of the poor of her country. She has been and always will be a source of inspiration for me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to my three committee members: Chris Field, Bruce Jennings and Tom Roy for helping me clarify my thoughts and ask the right questions.

I am also deeply thankful to my aunt Paquita whose enthusiasm and dedication guided me back to Honduras.

PREFACE

I was fortunate enough to spend the latter part of 1991 and all of 1992 working in my native Honduras with the double objective of helping the Organization for the Entrepreneurial Development of Women (*Organización de Desarrollo Empresarial Femenino*—ODEF), a local Non Governmental Organization (NGO) plan the creation of the Green Legacy (*Herencia Verde*) Center, a Teaching—Learning center for sustainable agriculture and environmental education, while, at the same time, I gathered information for my professional paper I needed for my master's degree at the University of Montana.

My original intention was to write my professional paper on the significance of a center like Herencia Verde in a tropical rural country such as Honduras. But two events made me decide otherwise. First, my aunt—the founder and director of ODEF—died tragically in an automobile accident on June, 1992. She was the soul and driving force not only behind the Herencia Verde project, but behind all of ODEF. The Herencia Verde project was thrown off course and de-prioritized as the new ODEF administration took over. Second, during my stay in Honduras and as part of the planning process for Herencia Verde, I made observations on the way that government and non-government organizations carried out agricultural extension work. I noticed the dichotomy, and even the polarity, between middle class urban technicians, proud of their knowledge in high-yield agricultural techniques, and the “ignorant” poor rural campesinos who had been made the recipients of those same technologies and strategies that could, presumably, save the land and themselves. At the same time, I heard of the many failures that agricultural projects encountered despite (or as I now believe: *because of*) their careful and detailed planning.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|----------|---|
| ADO | Agricultural Development Organization |
| ANACH | Asociación Nacional de Campesinos de Honduras <i>National Association of Honduran Peasants</i> |
| BANADESA | Banco Nacional de Desarrollo Agrícola <i>National Agricultural Development Bank</i> |
| CARE | Comisión Americana de Remesas al Exterior <i>American Commission of Overseas Donations</i> |
| CDC | Christian Development Commission |
| CNTC | Central Nacional de Trabajadores del Campo <i>National Headquarters of Peasant Workers</i> |
| EEC | The European Economic Community |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization |
| IAF | Inter-American Foundation |
| IDB | Inter-American Development Bank |
| INA | Instituto Nacional Agrario <i>National Agrarian Institute</i> |
| INADES | Instituto Nacional de Ambiente y Desarrollo <i>National Institute of the Environment and Development</i> |
| LUPE | Land Use and Productivity Enhancement Project |
| NGO | Non Governmental Organization |
| ODC | Over-Developed Country |
| ODEF | Organización de Desarrollo Empresarial Femenino <i>Organization for the Entrepreneurial Development of Women</i> |
| SBCI | Solar Box Cookers International |
| SRN | Secretaría de Recursos Naturales <i>Ministry of Natural Resources</i> |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| USAID | U.S. Agency for International Development |

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s international development organizations, ranging from local grassroots groups to large international institutions, have embraced what has come to be known as the “new orthodoxy” of development which emphasizes “long term, participatory development strategies” (Allen 1990:63). Most agricultural development organizations (ADOs)¹ fully advocate this approach centered around community participation. However, the meaning of community participation varies widely among ADOs (Paul 1987) and it is usually defined according to the needs, interests and views of each ADO.

Despite the current concern with community participation, paternalism still pervades most international agricultural development work, albeit in a new and more subtle form. This paper will argue that this neo-paternalism robs beneficiaries the practice of their own development and, consequently, stands in the way of the much lauded goal of grass-roots “empowerment.” The experience in Honduras illustrates how this new form of paternalism and its manifestations are largely responsible for the failure of development projects to meet the needs of the rural poor.

The most perverse manifestations of this neo-paternalism can be seen in the focus ADOs place on project-based development and technology transfer. Because meticulously designed projects help ADOs retain a firm control of all the aspects of planning and implementation, most ADOs assume the task of painstakingly working out project details instead of presenting general ideas that farmers can evaluate. Similarly, the process of technology transfer helps ADOs maintain control of the physical resources and knowledge necessary for the utilization of the new technologies. A desire for power could be a motive for this

¹ The term ADOs will be used in this paper to refer to NGOs, development institutions, government agencies and other organizations that work in agricultural development in poor countries.

modus operandi, but paternalism is probably more of a culprit because ADO personnel usually assume that beneficiaries² are incapable of carrying out projects to a happy conclusion if left to themselves, and thus, deem it necessary to retain control if their efforts are to succeed.

This study will attempt to demonstrate how virtually all the activities of ADOs are shaped by this new form of paternalism, from their objectives, to their methods, to their evaluations. The paper will explain why, within this context, current practices of ADOs can achieve only very limited gains in furthering the cause of the rural poor as their formula for rural development fails to address, either directly or indirectly, the real causes of poverty and powerlessness.

Concrete suggestions will be made as to how ADOs can redirect their efforts so that they will stop working *for* the rural poor and start working *with* them in a common search for development that is autonomous, dignified and self-sustaining. A major conclusion of this paper is that horizontal campesino-ADO cooperation is a fundamental and often underestimated requisite for advancing the livelihood of the rural poor.

ADOs have failed to achieve their lofty goals of equity and sustainability for many reasons, including the fact that many ADOs have their own agendas and hidden goals that do not necessarily coincide with those of the poor. Nonetheless, many ADO personnel have a genuine interest in the fate of the poor, but perhaps continue to focus on paternalistic approaches to development because they have not closely examined the merit and validity of their basic assumptions and methods. This paper is written with these activists in mind and with the hope that the poor farmers they attempt to help will truly be beneficiaries of their efforts.

² The terms *beneficiaries*, *farmers*, *small farmers*, *poor farmers*, *small land-holders*, *peasants*, and *campesinos* will be used interchangeably in this paper for two reasons: to avoid excessive repetition of one term, and to avoid associating a particular connotation, that could arise from historical or current usage, to any single term.

DESCRIPTIVE OUTLINE

Chapter one presents a background of Honduran agriculture within the framework of its predominantly agrarian economy. Then, it gives a brief description of the characteristics of current agricultural development work in Honduras. Revealing indicators of the social and economic well being of the rural population in Central America and, particularly, in Honduras are submitted to show that, despite large amounts of foreign development aid, the lot of the poor is today worse than ever. The chapter then describes the situation of small farmers in particular and concludes by suggesting that the worsening conditions of small farmers and the greater concentration of wealth in the country is in fact, partially, a result of agricultural development aid.

Chapter two describes the methods by which ADOs try to “promote” their technologies and ideologies. It also explains why these methods are detrimental if not in the short, then in the long run for campesinos.

Chapter three examines the image that developers have of their intended beneficiaries, in this case, campesinos. Developers typically look down on campesinos and underestimate their knowledge and abilities. It also describes how ADOs tend to see themselves as saviors of the poor rural masses and how this perception arises from a newly evolved form of paternalism, or neo-paternalism. Because of this attitude, most ADOs have a limited view of local participation and see it only as one more component or “input” by which participants contribute to the success of the projects they promote. At other times, participation is taken to be no more than equitable access to the benefits derived from participating in the ADOs’ projects (Oakley 1991:172-173).

Chapter four reviews the main goals of ADOs and how these arise from their basic assumptions. ADOs wish to increase the farmers’ quality of life and

assume they can best do so by increasing their productivity. Increased productivity then becomes a subgoal which, they further believe, can most effectively be achieved by introducing technological packages by means of projects. Of course, the technologies first have to be adopted by the farmers, and as a result, farmer “adoption” becomes yet another subgoal of ADOs. The chapter argues that the assumptions made by ADOs are debatable at best, and the subgoals derived from them are a result of neo-paternalism; particularly, the focus on technology transfer ADOs use to achieve their goals stems from a belief that their technical know-how can rescue poor farmers. Upon deciding that the technologies they control are exactly what campesinos need, ADOs become chiefly concerned with changing the farmers’ behavior so that they will adopt their technologies. Promoting technologies adoption—a subgoal often difficult to achieve—by itself consumes a considerable part of the resources of ADOs. To complicate matters, even when adopted, new technologies can, and often do, have negative consequences. The last part of this chapter presents the experience of ODEF as a case study of an ADO that has attempted to implement two very different approaches to the problems of rural development. On the one hand, ODEF through its micro-enterprise development program espouses a true participatory and enabling development process. On the other hand, ODEF’s other programs (especially those in sustainable agriculture and appropriate technologies) assume a paternalistic, top-down approach. The results of both approaches are examined.

The final chapter describes how and why the present paternalistic philosophies of ADOs rob peasants of the opportunity to practice their own development and the attainment of personal growth. Because ADO projects act mainly as palliatives, they actually tend to sustain the status quo and keep the poor in their place. Fundamental reasons for poverty, that present agricultural devel-

opment work fails to address, are discussed. Finally, suggestions are made as to how ADOs can modify their goals and methodologies so that they can more significantly improve the lot of the poor. A program in Honduras that uses the participatory process approach to development is examined. This example serves as a practical model for ADOs on how they can be most effective in rural development. The participatory process approach to development "relies on...an interactive style of problem solving" in which ADO personnel negotiate "with potential beneficiaries to establish some common priorities" (Gow and Sant 1985:124, 126). Supporters of this approach basically contend that ADOs can better serve the poor by doing just that, acting as servers, working closely with grass-roots indigenous groups, and acting as providers of resources, and when called for, offering advice and guidance to these groups.

Background

Central America is the most rural region of Latin America. Whereas in the rest of Latin America the rural population is only 24 percent of the population, in Central America it is 54 percent (Annis 1992:174). Tied to this fact, Central American economies have a predominantly agrarian character. Within this context, the economy of Honduras probably depends more on agriculture than that of any of its Central American neighbors. Agriculture accounts for 27 percent of the Gross Domestic Product and agricultural products make up 58 percent of all export revenues.¹ The agricultural sector employs more than 50 percent of the labor force (Barry 1991:338).

The agriculture practiced in Honduras can be classified into four major categories. First, there are the multinationals practicing highly mechanized, highly capitalized agriculture. The largest agrobusinesses in the country are United Brands, Castle & Cooke and RJ Reynolds (Del Monte). They export raw and semi-processed products such as bananas, pineapples, palm oil, beef, and sugar. Honduras is among the leading producers of bananas in the world.² In 1987, bananas accounted for almost half of Honduran agricultural export earnings. (Barry 1991:309) Second, there are the medium to large producers. These are middle and upper class Honduran farmers who raise cattle, grow coffee or other export products, sometimes called "non-traditional" exports. These include citrus, cantaloupes, cacao, and watermelons. Included in this group are also the burgeoning shrimp and lobster producers on the Honduran southern coast. Third, there's the landed peasantry. These are *minifundistas* or small landholders

¹ The main agricultural exports in descending order are: bananas, coffee and shellfish.

² Honduras is sometimes called the original "Banana Republic".

who rarely own more than five hectares of land. They practice subsistence agriculture and grow basic grains (e.g., beans, corn, sorghum, and sometimes, rice); however, an increasing number are growing export products on a small scale. They are poor, receive very few services, but are not completely dispossessed. The rest of the rural inhabitants are the landless peasants. These are the poorest of the poor and make up about half of the rural population (Barry 1991:309). They are often tenant farmers who work the land as sharecroppers, practice shifting agriculture, and work as field laborers in commercial export farms (e.g., bananas, livestock, coffee and sugarcane). In order to survive, they also engage in non-agricultural activities such as the sale of wares and handicrafts (Maradiaga Díaz 1990:11-12).

Due to the paramount importance of agriculture in the Honduran economy and because the majority of the population still practices agriculture as its principal way of life, much work is currently taking place in Honduras in the area of agricultural development. The two main executing bodies are the government and non-profit NGOs. The government obtains a large part of its budget to implement agricultural development programs from international institutions such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and from other governments such as the European Economic Community (EEC), Japan, Canada, and the U.S. through organizations such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Inter-American Foundation (IAF).

The Honduran Government

The Honduran government does most of its extension work through two agencies, the Ministry of Natural Resources (*Secretaría de Recursos Naturales*,

SRN) and the National Agrarian Institute (*Instituto Nacional Agrario*, INA). INA works primarily with the *reform sector*, that is, the small percentage of *campesinos* (poor farmers) who have obtained land through the country's deficient land reform program.³ INA has divided the reform sector into two subsectors: those who grow commercial export crops and those who grow basic grains. Export crop farmers have been given the best "designated areas" and 55 percent of the cultivable land. They also receive most of INA's budget resources (i.e., 65 percent versus only 8 percent for the basic grains subsector in 1981) and technical assistance even though they make up only about 30 percent of all reform groups (Stringer 1989:372). It is not surprising, then, that export-oriented groups have been the most successful.

Non-Governmental Organizations

It has been estimated that 86 percent of the NGOs currently working in Honduras perform agricultural extension work either as a primary or secondary activity (Maradiaga Díaz 1990:34). According to a recent study, sixty-six NGOs have projects in agricultural extension, delivering services to approximately 50,000 beneficiaries who represent about 15 percent of the farmers in the country. These NGOs hire a total of 564 employees to do the agricultural extension work, more than twice the number hired by the main agricultural extension government agency, SRN. Also, the 50,000 farmers who receive services from the NGOs are twice as many as those serviced by SRN. Most of these beneficiaries are small producers with their own plots, groups from the reform sector or low income women with families (Kaimowitz, et al. 1992:1).

³ Since it began in 1962, the "agrarian reform" as is known in Honduras, has affected barely 8% of the nation's farmland and only 10% of the rural families.

Of the NGOs working in agriculture, forty (sixty percent) are of Honduran origin, the rest are affiliated with international NGOs, mainly from the U.S.. This latter group includes the largest organizations: Association Save the Children, Christian Development Commission, Plan of Honduras, World Neighbors and World Vision. These NGOs get most of their support from their parent organizations. Most of the other Honduran organizations get some support from foreign, mainly from the U.S., private foundations and individuals. To a lesser extent support is also received from the Honduran government and international institutions. Almost half of the NGOs have religious affiliations (Kaimowitz, et al. 1992:6), and therefore, get much support from local and international church constituencies. The churches most involved in agricultural development are the Catholic,⁴ the Anglican, and the Episcopalian

The diverse groups, organizations and institutions mentioned above are spending considerable amounts of money in development, particularly agricultural development, in Honduras. To illustrate, the Land Use and Productivity Enhancement Project (LUPE)—USAID's largest natural resource management project in Central America—runs with a budget of \$50 million (1988-1995) (Stonich 1992:396). ODEF's center for sustainable agriculture and environmental education will run with a budget of approximately \$800,000 for its first three years of operation (ODEF and Katalysis 1993:1).

Failures of Current Agricultural Development Work

Between 1979 and 1991, Central America received approximately three billion dollars in development assistance from the U.S. (Annis 1992:177). From

⁴ Catholic Relief Services, one of the NGOs with widest coverage, is the development arm of the Church. The German Catholic Church supports an agricultural training center and other programs in western Honduras. The Catholic Church in southern Honduras supports another agricultural training center through the San José Obrero Association.

the development assistance agencies of industrialized countries in general, Central America received an average of \$1.26 billion per year in Official Development Assistance (ODA)⁵ between 1982 and 1989. Honduras received an average of \$243 million a year in ODA in this time period (Hammond 1992:236).

Even with this substantial flow of money pouring into the small Central American economies, poverty in the region is today more widespread than it was in 1980.⁶ More than half (56 percent) of the general population and 70 percent of the rural population is considered poor (Annis 1992:5).⁷ The situation in Honduras where 70 percent of the general population is poor is even more distressing. 80 percent of the rural population is poor, 87 percent of which lives in extreme poverty (Annis 1992:183). 90 percent of the rural labor force is affected by seasonal unemployment; 65 percent of this labor force is under employed. 52 percent of rural Hondurans lack access to potable water and 58 percent lack means for the safe disposal of waste products. (Maradiaga Díaz 1990:87) Only 45 percent have access to health-care services (Barry 1991:319). 38 percent of children younger than five exhibit some degree of malnutrition (Stonich 1992:387). This state of affairs is reflected in Honduras' highly skewed income distribution: the richest 20 percent of the population receive 58 percent of the national income while the poorest 20 percent attempt to survive on barely 4 percent (Annis 1992:181).

Most of the development money spent in the last fifteen years has gone into projects for natural resource management and rural development with little to show for it. Annis notes that,

⁵ ODA is the net amount of disbursed grants and concessional loans received by a country. Grants include gifts in money, goods, or services, for which no repayment is required. A concessional loan has a grant element of 25 percent or more (Hammond 1992:236).

⁶ According to a report by the International Labor Organization, poverty in Latin America increased by 26% in the 1980s. Central America's poverty increased even more than the Latin American average (ILO 1992:31).

⁷ Those unable to meet a minimal standard of nutrition.

despite...new policies and programs, and a substantial investment of public and private money, three inescapable realities remain:

- Poverty has generally gotten worse, not better
- The region's physical resources are being depleted at an ever accelerating rate
- Current responses—though often positive—are neither reversing poverty nor stemming the drain of physical assets (Annis 1992:3-4).

The Social and Economic Conditions of Poor Farmers

Between 1974 and 1988, urban population in Honduras grew at an annual rate slightly greater than 5 percent versus only 2.8 percent for the rural population (Daugherty 1989:40). Considering that fecundity is about twice as great in the rural area, these figures point to the fact that Honduras is no exception to the phenomenon of large scale rural to urban migration taking place in most poor countries. This migration is a clear sign of an ever degrading quality of life in rural areas stemming from a lack of opportunities, a lack of access to suitable agricultural land and a lack of development, sustainable or otherwise.

The production of basic grains in Honduras, the type of agriculture most low income farmers practice, suffered greatly during the 1980s. The country went from being a net food exporter in the late 1970s to a net food importer in the 1980s. Presently, Honduras does not feed itself. In 1988, for instance, 35,000 metric tons of corn, 6500 metric tons of beans, and 8000 metric tons of milk products had to be imported into the country (Maradiaga-Díaz 1990:82). A reason behind this phenomenon is a considerable increase in the production costs of basic grains during this time period. Between 1974 and 1987, costs jumped from \$40/Ha to \$266/Ha for beans and from \$37/Ha to \$225/Ha for corn (Maradiaga-Díaz 1990:82). This increase can be attributed to a high inflation rate and to a decreasing land base that forces farmers to exhaust the land

dedicated to basic grains so that increasing amounts of fertilizers are needed to sustain yields. The land base dedicated to basic grains has decreased in part because of population growth but also because more land has been turned to growing export products such as beef, sugar and cotton. For instance, development programs supported by foreign aid (e.g., the World Bank) have encouraged the growth of the cattle industry which now takes up about 30 percent of the total Honduran land surface, much of this being good agricultural land (Barry 1991:327). This point will be further developed later in the paper. Because the increase in costs of basic grain production stems from compensation of losses in several areas of the agricultural systems, it has not translated into higher yields (Maradiaga Díaz 1990:82-83).

Yields of most basic grains in Central America declined in the 1980s. In Honduras, between 1981 and 1987, yields per hectare of the two main staple food crops, corn and beans, decreased by 18 and 30 percent respectively. By contrast, yields of three main export crops—bananas, coffee, and sugar—showed a marked increase. Yields of bananas increased by about 18 percent and those of coffee by 35 percent (Annis 1992:188). This partly reflects the tendency of government extension agencies to support the export sector to the detriment of producers of basic grains, the deteriorating land base for food crops, and the fact that export producers are able to hire private technical assistance.

The situation of small farmers is difficult enough, but it has been exacerbated by the large quantities of grains, such as corn and wheat, that the U.S. sends to Honduras in the form of soft credits under the PL480 Title I Food Aid program. In the 1980s, Honduras received an average of \$17 million annually in food aid imports. These imports not only increase the national debt, but depress prices for small farmers trying to market their grains.

All the factors outlined above combined with a rapid increase in population, have resulted in a marked decrease in annual per capita production of staple grains. Corn went from 128 Kg in 1970 to 91 Kg in 1988, and beans from 17 Kg to 5 Kg in the same time period. It is important to note that staple grains supply about 57 percent of the calories and 49 percent of the proteins in the Honduran diet (Ardón Matute 1983:116). Corn accounts for most caloric and protein intake in the rural area. A survey of campesinos in southern Honduras found that 51 percent of the household essentially ate only tortillas and beans (McCulloch and Futrell 1988:187). This decrease in production, coupled with an increase in poverty, led to a reduction in per capita caloric and protein intake with the result that malnutrition, which had declined in the 1960s and 1970s, worsened in the 1980s (Barry 1991:319). According to the World Health Organization, 75 percent of Hondurans suffer from some degree of malnutrition (Barry 1991:305).

The Role of ADOs

ADOs, as will be discussed in this paper, have lacked either the ability, the willingness, or the insight to address the fundamental factors that have resulted in the various predicaments that plague small farmers and their agriculture. According to a joint report by government agencies and the US AID,

the low yields of [Honduran] agriculture clearly reflect the poor quality of extension services...the programs are distant from the needs of producers...[most] working methodologies don't take into account the opinion of producers when making decisions,...[with the result that] most Honduran [farmers] receive no technical assistance of any kind, and for those who do, it is not appropriate (Daugherty 1989:119-120).

Though they have failed to improve the quality of their lives (much less, "empower" them), the myriad development projects in rural areas have touched the lives of most of the Honduran poor in one way or another. No longer are

they the naive, remote farmers who looked in hopeful amazement at the technologies brought in by outsiders. In a way, the experience of the last fifteen to twenty years has made today's rural poor more suspicious and distrustful of outsiders. Annis makes an interesting graphic exposition of the characteristics of today's "post-development" dispossessed:

The social character of poverty in the 1990s is very different from that of previous generations...First, though as economically impoverished as ever, the rural poor of the 1990s are no longer necessarily isolated or "traditional." Today's rural poor are not generally self-contained subsistence farmers of a backwater population waiting for development to happen. In Choluteca [Honduras] for example...the hardware of development projects peppers the landscape: Peace Corps rabbit hutches, CARE latrines, World Neighbors terraces, EEC farm implements, USAID schools, and IDB health posts, and government officials hurry in the acronym-initialed, four-wheel drive vehicles.

Rather, these rural poor are what is left over *after* development...The poverty they face is in many ways more deeply ingrained and more intractable than the "traditional" village poverty of their parents' generation (Annis 1992:8-9).

Some authors argue that much international development aid has actually helped worsen poverty and inequality by helping entrench some institutions that keep the masses oppressed (Alvarado 1987; Barry 1991; Stonich 1992).

Elvia Alvarado, leader of the Central Nacional de Trabajadores del Campo (CNTC), a peasant grass-roots organization, suggests not only that foreign development projects have done little for her people, but that they are, in fact, partially responsible for their situation: "the Peace Corps can send more and more people, the United Nations can have more and more projects, AID can be here for a century—and our problems would still exist...for us all these institutions are just part of the system that keeps us poor" (1987:103). USAID, for example, has a great influence on the development work practiced in Honduras. USAID is almost completely responsible for last decade's extraordinary growth in the

number of NGOs working in Honduras since “most of this increase was in U.S. private and church organizations funded by the U.S. government” (Barry 1991:322). But USAID uses its influence to advance U.S. political and economic interests by supporting conservative sectors of the Honduran society who favor the status quo while it disregards those less powerful groups who struggle for change: “Most AID development funds go to groups that focus on entrepreneurship, export production, or paternalistic community development. Excluded from AID’s funding programs are grass-roots peasant associations, militant trade unions, progressive development organizations, and human-rights groups” (Barry 1991:322). Does USAID, then, intend to achieve just development when, as the few progressive, independent NGOs in the country believe, this can only occur by directly supporting “self-organized poor people’s organizations?” (Barry 1991:322). Barry concludes that USAID

has not used its economic-aid package to help Honduras tackle its deep structural problems such as land tenure patterns and declining per capita grain production. Nor has it insisted that the government and oligarchy develop strategies to meet the basic health, educational, and income needs of the country’s impoverished majority. Instead AID has concentrated on implementing the macroeconomic and private-sector solutions that aggravate and accentuate the deep social and economic divisions in Honduras (1991:331).

In this respect, USAID-funded traditional agricultural extension projects generally disregard the small farmer as they are aimed mainly at medium and large farmers (Derclaye 1987:12). The Inter American Women’s Commission maintains that extension work from the Honduran government “tends to actually keep the peasant population unaware and away from their main concerns.” (CIM 1984:A-9)

The reasons for the failure of ADOs to meet their larger goal of raising the quality of life of the rural poor are many, including institutional, political, and

technical problems and deficiencies, plus self-interest and outright corruption.

Yet one main reason—seldom acknowledged—is the focus on offering individual projects intent on transferring technology. Instead of promoting self-reliance by letting campesinos attempt to solve their own problems, projects tend to make them more dependent by giving them only the role of implementors and excluding them from the process of designing and planning the programs from which they are supposed to benefit.

CHAPTER 2: WORKING METHODS OF ADOs

The Basic Four Step Method

The assumptions, beliefs, predispositions and attitudes of ADOs have been synthesized in a basic methodology used almost universally in Honduras and most other poor countries. Starting from a premise that technology transfer should be the basis for agricultural development, ADOs have developed a basic four step working method. These steps, extensively used by extension agencies in Honduras, are:

- 1) Gather information from the communities (usually called “community participation”). This includes a physical study of the area and a socio-economic study of “target” groups in order to understand their needs and priorities.
- 2) Develop or select pre-developed technologies
- 3) Design, plan and implement project-based programs to promote these technologies and enhance the likelihood of their acceptance.
- 4) Follow-up and evaluation to determine how well the farmers are implementing the organization’s project(s).

Social/Technical Studies and Technology Selection

According to Vergara and MacDicken, the first steps before attempting to “disseminate” agroforestry systems are:

- Identify and understand the characteristics and basic needs of the intended beneficiaries of technology diffusion efforts.
- Define and understand the nature of the agroecosystems within which these beneficiaries operate.

This basic information is indispensable in formulating effective extension methods and technology delivery strategies. (underlining added) (Vergara and MacDicken 1990:355)

While this information may be important for extension work, it should not be so for the purpose of “formulating...technology delivery strategies”, but as a background knowledge of the people and the land. By using this information to assess how to convince campesinos to do their bidding, ADOs are treating them as objects and not as subjects.

According to Bonilla Contreras, director of the National Program for Agricultural Research, the main areas of activity for an “adequate” system of technology generation and transfer are: “characterization and analysis, planning, experimentation, and technology transfer” (1983:112). “Characterization and analysis” refers to gathering information on the agro-ecological and socio-economic aspects of the region where extension work is going to be carried out. This mainly means studying existing agricultural systems, and identifying physical and social limiting factors in the farm and its surroundings so that “appropriate” technologies can be developed or selected.

In Honduras, NGOs start working in an area by first visiting “the communities to see if anyone is interested in participating [in their projects]” (Kaimowitz, et al. 1992:11). The NGO comes to the communities with one or more pre-designed projects in some cases, in others, it just brings the technology and works out the details of the projects later. Then, “the NGO tries to get to know the community problems through informal surveys or meetings where community problems and possible projects are discussed”¹ (Kaimowitz, et al. 1992:11). NGOs consider this first step “community participation.” They usually use the

¹ World Vision, for instance, sends extensionists for a couple of weeks to a community to find out about local problems before developing its working plan.

information gathered at this point to decide which of their pre-packaged technologies to use and how they can make them more acceptable to the community.

INADES, a Honduran private organization that specializes in environmental education and environmental consulting, provides a good example of how this methodology is actually put into practice. Under a one year contract (1992), INADES was to provide ODEF staff and beneficiaries with environmental education, training and support in environmental projects. INADES' "promotion" work follows the format:

- 1) Visit the communities and arrange a meeting with community members.
- 2) At the meeting give a basic talk about environmental issues and explain concepts such as "ecosystem" and "food-web."
- 3) Ask the participants to list all their community problems.
- 4) Arrange for a second meeting where a working plan is to be designed.

Attendance to the first meeting was usually good and people seemed enthusiastic except that most of the problems they listed were not those INADES was supposed to work with. People would say things like "Our children have diarrhea", "We need better roads", "We don't have enough land" or "Our water is bad". Many of these problems could be considered "environmental" yet, INADES would only support projects directly related to environmental issues such as reforestation and soil conservation. Such projects could help the community in the longer term, but did not answer what community members perceived as their most immediate and pressing problems. Most people would be disillusioned after the first meeting (their expectations had been raised when they were asked about all their community problems). Only a few would participate in INADES' projects, and fewer still, would carry them through.

As mentioned earlier, I spent 1992 in Honduras helping ODEF with the planning of an agricultural training center for campesino families. This work followed the conventional pattern described above. The general plan of action was:

- 1) Conduct a socioeconomic study and compile base-line data on the communities with which the institute is to work. Conduct a study of the agricultural practices and the physical characteristics in the region.
- 2) Meet extensively with potential clients to clarify their needs, interests and priorities.
- 4) Clarify the vision, mission, and concrete objectives for the institute.
- 5) Design the curriculum, services and programs. Refine teaching methodology and select a number of technologies and agricultural practices to teach at the institute.

Even though we, the planners, were to do all the decisions on what the center was going to be like, the project was, of course, supposed to have "community participation." All the community participation we had use for took place during steps one and two. We felt confident that, based on observations, surveys, interviews, etc., we, as project planners, could devise technological solutions for the agricultural problems of the communities in the whole northern area of Honduras. This goal was undoubtedly presumptuous and based on the questionable assumption that a large centralized institution can be effective in addressing the problems of diverse groups of small farmers in an extensive area.

Program Design and Planning

The program design and planning step is illustrated by the Land Use and Productivity Enhancement Program (LUPE), USAID's ambitious \$50 million nat-

ural resource management project being implemented in SRN in central and southern Honduras. The project has an eight year life span (1988-1995) (Stonich 1992:396). Within this period it intends to benefit directly 50,000 small farmers and, indirectly, another 15,000 peasant families (SRN/USAID 1988:3). Its main objectives are:

- An increase in the basic grain production of 50,000 small farmers by an average of 30 percent. Sixty percent of these will be hillside farmers and 40 percent will be small commercial producers. 12,500 of these will be households led by women.
- Implementation of soil/water/forest management systems on 50,000 hectares of hillsides.
- Crop diversification—to provide fruit and vegetables—practiced by 5000 peasant families.
- An increase of 5000 home and community vegetable gardens grown and managed by women in the participating communities.
- Commercial production—in excess of subsistence needs—of agricultural products by 5000 peasant families.
- The introduction of agroforestry applications that include 6 million multiple use trees plus 500,000 fruit trees through the development of 500 new community tree nurseries and additional small tree nurseries in the individual farms (SRN/USAID 1988:4-5).

How were these numbers arrived at? The SRN/USAID project description has no indication that “beneficiaries” were involved in any way in arriving at these figures. One wonders how much the numbers have to do with reality. The project is even more complex,. These objectives are only for one of its components, the Crop System Enhancement component. The project has two more

(equally detailed) components: Animal System Enhancement and Post-Harvest Interventions, plus a program of Credit and Incentives.

This project exemplifies how program planners devise neatly packaged projects that reflect their aspirations and not necessarily, the beneficiaries'. These types of projects are bound to encounter resistance from the campesinos. Take, for instance, the objective to create 5000 new vegetable gardens to be managed by women in the communities. Are there enough women who care about vegetable gardens to fulfill these objectives? And, even if they are induced into growing and managing these gardens (perhaps through the use of food or monetary incentives, also mentioned in the project's description document), what assurances exist that the gardens will be maintained when the incentives cease? Of course, probably most of the project's officers feel satisfaction at doing something "good" for the poor of their country when, in reality, they are actually helping perpetuate their poverty.

Evaluation

Evaluation, the last step of the ADOs' working method is usually very limited and tends to overlook beneficiary feedback. Besides, it generally fails to incorporate comprehensive evaluations of the projects' long term general goals and consequences. Cox notes that,

[Project] feedback is absent in conventional, over-engineered development efforts...[and] evaluations are seldom designed to be more than reflections on whether or not a project is being executed as planned, and as measured by the highly structured and often quantitative indicators of progress set forth in the original design (1992:63).

Honduran NGOs typically conduct periodical self-evaluations to discuss the progress of their work. However, these evaluations address only logistical con-

cerns, and, in the best cases, the accomplishment of quantitative goals such as the number of communal tree nurseries, or the number of hectares devoted to a particular agricultural practice. (Kaimowitz, et al. 1992:15-16) Again, once ADOs have a project underway, no serious reflection on its overall goals, consequences, acceptance, or social sustainability of their projects is carried out.

The attitude behind the four-step method is well illustrated by SRN's well structured "system of operations." Its basic steps are to:

- assess the needs of local communities and the condition of the natural resource base;
- formulate technical assistance strategies and select appropriate interventions;
- plan a chronological sequence for technical assistance activities;
- scientifically monitor the level of success and validity of techniques being implemented (underlining added) (Dulin 1987:459);

This "system of operations" reflects the tendency, common among ADOs, to think for their beneficiaries by "formulating strategies" and devising detailed long term plans from which the locals will supposedly benefit. This approach tends to undermine ADO work and the attainment of their stated goal of self sustained development in the countryside. It is rooted in stereotypes and misconceptions that outsiders usually have of campesinos that will be examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: COMMON ATTITUDES OF ADOs TOWARD POOR FARMERS

Stereotypes and Misconceptions ADOs Generally Hold about Peasant Farmers

In order to better understand the workings of ADOs, it is necessary to understand their views of campesinos. In general, one finds that development planners see poor farmers as backward and ignorant. This belief is partly based on the fact that most campesinos have little formal education and use apparently crude agricultural practices. Their relatively low yields serve as proof of their backwardness to educated agricultural technicians who see a direct causal relationship between traditional agriculture and low yields. For this reason, outside "experts" rarely bother to learn about traditional practices, their merits and constraints. They assume that "local information and knowledge are intrinsically inferior and therefore to be ignored" (Gow and Sant 1985:125). Thus, they feel they have nothing to learn from campesinos.

Another common perception in Honduras is that, if not for their own sake, campesinos should be helped out of their desperate situation in order to avoid social instability.¹ Arriaga, as director of INA, believes that small projects are needed to satisfy the immediate needs of peasants because, otherwise, they become violent and that violence spreads and produces the "phenomenons" seen in the countries around Honduras (Arriaga'Iraheta 1983:83). SRN's motto says: "By producing more, we will preserve peace (*Produciendo más, conservaremos la paz*)" (Derclaye 1987:17). This view alienates development workers from campesinos because campesinos gain importance not in their own right but as possible trouble makers. In other words, at the same time that developers want to help campesinos, they fear and distrust them.

¹ This perception arises from the fact that in the 1980s Honduras was surrounded by countries with raging civil wars.

ADOs also see small farmers not as a force to work with, but actually to work against. They need to break down the presumed “resistance to change” that is an obstacle to agricultural improvement. Stephen McGaughey acting as chief of the Inter-American Development Bank states that, “since low-income farmers are risk-averse...the development of social forestry will usually face initial resistance in incorporating new adherents” (Gregersen and MacGaughey 1987:12).

Campeños are thought to be a hard headed conservative group who cannot come to realize what is good for them. Thus, a World Bank staff working paper states that one objective of communication support is to “facilitate change in attitudes and behavior which stand in the way of people benefiting from the goods and services provided to them” (Perrett 1982:13).

Two FAO agents make true heroes out of extension workers because they have to deal with stubborn campeños: “Special qualities mark the successful extension agent. She or he normally possesses...the patience and perseverance of a teacher to enable him or her to reach the evasive and reluctant farmers, and the dedication and persistence of a religious missionary...” (Vergara and MacDicken 1990:370). Is this like colonizing Spaniards trying to “civilize” the “savage” Indians? The concept of fighting resistance, of pushing to get their way, that many ADOs have, effectively obviates constructive dialog and a common search for solutions.

Middle-class Honduran urbanites—the social group that many ADO agents and program planners belong to—see campeños as Indians (in fact, most are culturally Mestizos, not Indians) because they are generally darker and have more Indian stock than the overall population. Thus, people from the rural area are usually called “Indians.” The noun “Indian” and the adjective “stupid” usually go together in the common phrase *indio bruto*. Thus, racism cannot be

overlooked as a factor that helps institutionalize the view that peasants have below average intelligence and lack the capacity to solve their own problems.

Comparisons between Poor and Affluent Farmers

The prejudice against poor farmers becomes more obvious in the comparisons made between them and wealthier farmers. Because of their greater economic success, ADOs regard affluent farmers with more respect than small farmers even though their success is largely due to their greater access to resources. To a point, ADOs even exempt large farmers from having a need of the resource management technologies they consider essential for small farmers. Vergara and MacDicken (1990:356) feel that even when large farmers can benefit from new technological packages they "are much better informed, and can decide much more readily to adopt any land-use system...that best suits their goals."

In another comparison, the director of the National Program for Agricultural Research run by SRN says that large farmers "have a good cultural level, economic sufficiency, and a driving competitive spirit. The Programs of [Technology] Transfer and Generation find no obstacles in the adoption of new technologies offered to them" (Bonilla Contreras 1983:103-104). By contrast, peasants do not adopt new technologies not just because they lack money or other resources but because of their low "cultural level" and their lack of a "competitive spirit" (Bonilla Contreras 1983:104). Is the poverty of campesinos proof that they lack a desire to compete? How necessary is this "competitive" spirit to improve their agriculture?

Larger farmers are considered to have the ability to make wiser resource management decisions than smaller ones even though this is often not the case. The erosion impact of grazing cattle on good agricultural land, for example, can

hardly be considered good resource management. What's more, they are given the prerogative, denied to campesinos, of making the decisions they consider best for themselves. This deference to affluent farmers on the part of ADOs basically says "If you are rich you are free to exercise your best judgment; if you are poor you better do as we say because your poverty is evidence that you lack the sense to know better than the experts."

The above examples show how campesinos are stereotyped, lumped together as a group with similar traits. Overlooking their heterogeneity and individuality makes it easier for developers to come up with simple solutions for their complex problems. In addition to underestimating the knowledge, abilities, and resources of campesinos, ADOs are inclined to see themselves as possessors of technological solutions to deliver to farmers, solutions that, they believe, put them in the position of saviors of the dispossessed. This technocratic neo-paternalism stems from the view that ADOs have of their "target" groups or populations as needy yet inept people.

Neo-Paternalism

Because of the opinion professional developers have of campesinos, it comes as no surprise that they see them as forsaken children in need of help and, respectively, see themselves as their saviors. In this context, the knowledge and capacity of campesinos is usually underestimated. When INA evaluated the fact that millions had been spent in agrarian reform programs and in huge projects that benefited only a few peasants, it decided to,

take a small project to the peasant because with his level of agricultural culture he's not capable of starting a small project of cantaloupes. He's not capable of starting a project of corn. He doesn't know how much money to invest, what the costs and benefits are, what insecticides and fertilizers [he needs] (Arriaga Iraheta 1983:82).

Although the campesinos might not have all the information and skills available to start a commercial project, they are, most likely, seasoned farmers who do not necessarily need to have the project taken to them. Instead, they need information, training and other basic resources to assure the eventual success of their projects. Yet, INA feels that without its paternalistic support, campesinos are bound to fail. Thus, it is not enough to provide resources to the campesino because “even then he could fail. We need to take to him a small project, already designed, and then, there is a real possibility of success” (underlining added) (Arriaga Iraheta 1983:84).

Bonilla as chief of the agricultural research program of the SRN also believes that campesinos need ready-made solutions that only technocrats can provide. Hence, the SRN needs to quickly generate technologies “so that they can consequently be tried and adopted by the producers. Our clientele really needs a special treatment...Only then can we solve problems or present solutions to them [the farmers]” (underlining added) (1983:104). With this attitude, development planners and technocrats become the protagonists of development whose “mission” is to save campesinos, to lift them out of their misery with imported skills and new technology. Campesinos are reduced to helpless objects waiting to be saved by urban technocrats. They are merely the instruments of development. As long term directors of what they consider “development”, ADOs deprive campesinos of the possibility of self-reliance. International ADOs share this view. Stephen McGaughey, as chief of the Inter-American Development Bank states that, as one of the first steps in a social forestry program,

adequate research and local testing will have to be done by the project coordinator to select the proper tree species...[further,] the eventual

success and wide acceptance² by the rural population of social forestry will depend ultimately on the ability of...public and private institutions to design the technology, transfer the resources, and administer the programs continuously for long periods of time. (underlining added). (Gregersen and MacGaughey 1987:15-16)

Developers take the pretentious attitude of believing they have the ability to save the world (and its people) if only they were listened to. Yet, drawing from the experience of a series of agricultural development projects in Mexico, Cernea observes that project planners, far from possessing the best working solutions,

lacked the requisite knowledge of local conditions to choose wisely among the multiple projects that could be undertaken. The local elites and various politicians exploited planners' lack of information and contact with the grass-roots to capture public investments for projects that primarily benefited them, disregarding the acute needs of the poorest strata. Without proper knowledge of local needs and potentials, even well-intended planners could do no better than choose to make investments they themselves assumed were needs (1992:14).

Hence, it would be more reasonable for ADOs to humbly accept that they do not have all the answers (no one does), and approach farmers with a willingness to share potentially useful ideas. This way ADOs could work together with farmers by putting at their disposal the resources available to them in a joint effort to find solutions to some of the farmers' problems.

Varieties of Paternalism

In his highly acclaimed and widely read primer for agricultural development "Two Ears of Corn" Roland Bunch distinguishes between two kinds of paternalism, the "give away" paternalism and the "doing things for people" paternalism (Bunch 1982:19-23). This second type of paternalism, he notes, is more subtle

² ADOs usually equate "wide acceptance" with "success," regardless of production or economic welfare results

than the first and, consequently, "more widespread and less often recognized as being harmful" (1982:22). By "doing things for people," Bunch means operational tasks such as "mak[ing] trips to town, do[ing] the accounting,pay[ing] the bills, keep[ing] people working together, or troubleshoot[ing]" (1982:22). Thus, by denouncing these types of paternalism, Bunch is advocating the wisdom of the old proverb: "Give a man a fish and he will eat for one day, teach him how to fish and he will eat always." But doing things for people goes beyond a project's implementation. By attempting to transfer technologies they have decided poor farmers need, by organizing farmers in favor of their projects, by designing and running development projects, by attempting to convince farmers that their way is best, ADOs are practicing an even more elusive form of paternalism: the paternalism of thinking for people.

To Bunch's list one should add this new form of paternalism which entails the paternalism of making important decisions for people, and the paternalism of believing "our" projects will solve "your" problems, in other words, the paternalism of one group presuming that it has the answers another group needs, a monopoly in truth. This type of paternalism is even more widespread and less recognized as harmful than those identified by Bunch because of its implicit acceptance by the development community. Yet, this paternalism, like its more obvious predecessors, removes the development process from the hands of small farmers. This is where its danger lies because if poor farmers are to stand on their own, they need to develop their character as full human beings. To the old proverb one should add: "give a man the opportunity to develop his independent thinking, to speak his voice, and the fisherman (along with his fellow fishermen) will be able to act when a factory upstream starts polluting his fishing grounds."

Because ADOs have refined paternalism to a new, subtler form, this new kind of paternalism will be referred to as “neo-paternalism” in this paper. One of the predominant manifestations of neo-paternalism is the belief that campesinos have a very limited ability to fully participate in the definition, design and management of development programs. This view leads to a narrow interpretation of what community participation is and self-fulfilling expectations of what it can achieve.

ADOs' View of Local Participation

Because ADOs wish to avoid the “paternalistic” label, they have enthusiastically embraced the concept of “community participation,” but because they still remain paternalistic, they are not ready to give up control. Thus, they have reached a compromise in which they understand local participation only as consultation with the farmers plus their involvement in low-level decision making and project implementation. In this sense, local or community participation is considered a desirable—but not essential—element in project planning and implementation. Therefore, it has virtually no significance outside the context of particular projects introduced by ADOs. A consultant in community participation for the World Bank defines it as the ability of beneficiaries to “influence the direction and execution” (underlining added) (Paul 1987:2) of projects and programs, but has nothing to say about the beneficiaries being able to judge the validity of the projects/programs in the first place. In fact, local participation usually means nothing more than community members providing information (identifying problems and needs) so that the program planners can make adjustments to their pre-designed projects, or at best, allow people to choose between two or more pre-determined “alternatives.” Many ADOs call participa-

tion what “in practice [is actually] a form of decentralized decision making still dominated by NGO staff and local elites, [in which] local elites often receive a disproportionate share of benefits” (Hammond 1992:223).

The view that community participation is an important but not indispensable element in agricultural development projects has been expressed by influential international institutions such as the FAO and the World Bank (Vergara and MacDicken 1990; Yudelman 1979). Two FAO agents note that “ordinary farmers...as adopters of innovative production technology...are an important element of the extension system. Without them...the extension process cannot be carried out completely” (Vergara and MacDicken 1990:370). This is clearly an understatement since the very meaning of “extension” implies a “reaching out” so that farmers should be at least half of the equation.

Even though NGOs are generally believed to be more participatory than other ADOs, a recent study found that Honduran NGOs working in agriculture extension to poor farmers do not regularly include campesinos

diagnosing problems, designing plans, and evaluating results [and], it is uncommon to find strong community participation. In spite of the fact that almost all NGOs talk about community participation, in actuality, verticalism is still dominant. Decisions are taken unilaterally by the program technical planners. Many NGOs understand participation as the presence of beneficiaries in their [the NGOs'] activities, and not as the contribution of beneficiaries to planning and decision making (Kaimowitz, et al. 1992:12).

ADOs that come with predesigned projects have their own agendas in mind. They justify spending of donors' funds and their very existence by minutely designing impressive projects that leave little room for flexibility. Complex pre-designed and pre-packaged projects, by their very nature, tend to exclude beneficiary input because overdesign places a straitjacket on their ability to adapt and evolve as the case may require. As a result, these projects do not systematically

solicit significant involvement from beneficiaries but instead, allow “only highly selective feedback...to influence decisions on adapting...to changing circumstances” (Cox 1992:63, 65). When, community involvement is scant the “beneficiaries” see the project as the organization’s, not as their own. So, whenever problems are encountered, the outside organization has the sole responsibility to resolve them because, a lack of participation in the design and management of a project results in a lack of commitment to the project’s success.

Consequently, when the project runs into unexpected obstacles (almost always the case), it lacks the commitment (experience, resources, ingenuity) of the beneficiaries who, as a group, have probably a greater ability than project planners to resolve such situations. Projects that minimize the role of local people run high risks of failure because they do not tap into the resources, knowledge and abilities of the farmers themselves. The extensive involvement of campesinos is paramount because it can “provide better information about local needs, help adapt programs to local conditions, provide opportunities for better communication, help mobilize local resources, [and] improve the odds that use and maintenance of facilities will be sustained...” (Hammond 1992:223).

Development programs that do not work closely with beneficiaries face an uncertain future because to achieve social sustainability they need to engage beneficiaries to the extent “that they will choose to remain involved [with the program] over time.” Without broad community support, Cox warns that “programs must rely on unsustainably expensive subsidized incentives or, worse, on coercive or punitive means to force compliance with unpopular measures” (Cox 1992:61). Besides, the programs lack vital local knowledge of soils, rainfall patterns, pests and diseases, market preferences, etc.

Taking this into consideration, ADOs’ understanding of *community involvement* has evolved. Not long ago, the perspectives of poor farmers were hardly

even considered. Nowadays, many project planners are striving to take into account the farmers' knowledge of local resources and conditions and their expressed needs while making efforts to involve them in "carrying out the planned projects" (Cernea 1992:15). Thomas distinguishes three types of what ADOs understand as "participatory processes": "(1) genuine representative, (2) top-down sensitive...and (3) local-elite decision making" (Thomas 1982:15).

Nowadays, most ADOs practice the "top-down sensitive" approach which is "based on sensitive consultation and interaction with those to be affected by the project" (Thomas 1982:15). However, even "sensitive consultation" is no substitute for true cooperation and power sharing between ADOs and farmers. As noted earlier, ADOs find it too easy to advocate community participation, carry out a few community surveys, and then design the programs according to their original interpretations of what is best for the communities.

It is necessary, then, to go beyond the concept of community participation in "top-down sensitive" outside projects to one of self-development by the communities. By not programming preconceived solutions, ADOs can avoid the "motivation" and "participation" problems, major concerns of project-leaders (Derclay 1987:33), because the undertakings can then be the people's own occurring as part of "spontaneous development" (Cernea 1992:2). Cernea notes that "farmers acting as economic agents...do not just 'participate' in development: they simply do it. They carry out productive activities according to their own goals, plans, designs, and resources. They are the actors and managers of their own economic growth, survival, and change 'programs'" (1992:2). Yet, ADOs can still play an important role in this type of development by acting as providers of any number of services and inputs the locals may need and by offering guidance in areas with which the farmers might have little knowledge or experience. Thus, ADOs could offer material inputs and services such as

technical assistance and training, access to information, communication, education, or whatever other resources happen to be available to the ADO.

The notion of participation is closely related to the process of technology transfer. Usually ADOs wish to encourage participation in order to increase the likelihood that participants will adopt new technologies. Because adoption is a principal aim of participation, "participation" is often conceived as only a project element to help achieve this purpose. As consultant to the World Bank, Perrett states that communication support—part of the World Bank's community participation efforts—aims to "facilitate change among project populations" and to "help to cope with negative behavior or attitudes" (1982:8). Concerning the attitude towards change that intended beneficiaries may have, Perrett adds that "project populations—particularly the poor—frequently are not ready for major change in their lives, or for the rate at which such change has to take place" (1982:8). Ironically, far from affecting major change in their lives, ADO projects, more often than not, leave untouched the causes for the abject poverty in which rural populations live.

What has now become the *conventional* notion of community participation arises more from a concern over the "success" of particular projects than over the long term welfare of the participants. For example, the World Bank considers its communication support activities such as "information, education, motivation, [and] promotion" are needed to change "opposition [to a project] to acceptance" and to "encourage certain groups of people to participate in a development project so that project goals are achieved" (Perrett 1982:8-9). The Bank is not concerned with the question of why there could be opposition to a project in the first place. Instead, in a surprisingly candid statement, a World Bank report states that communication support is particularly useful when the aim of a project is to "change what people want and like" (Perrett 1982:12).

As a result of a newly gained awareness of the important role of community members and groups, "Community Participation" has become a buzz phrase among ADOs. Yet, in most cases, their work still excludes beneficiaries from playing significant roles in development programs. Even in the best of cases, community participation is just that "participation" in projects designed, perhaps with the input of community members, by outsiders. In their self-appointed role of leaders of the poor rural "masses" and because of their often scarce understanding of their "clients" ADOs have made highly debatable assumptions about what campesinos need and how these needs can best be met, as described in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4: BASIC PHILOSOPHY OF ADOs

ADO Goals and Assumptions

The primary stated goal of most ADOs is to improve the quality of life of poor farmers. One of their basic assumptions is that this can be achieved by increasing agricultural productivity which will bring about an increase in the farmers' income.¹ Another basic assumption is that a lack of appropriate technology is the main limiting factor poor farmers face in their quest to increase their productivity. From these assumptions it follows that, in order to improve their quality of life, poor farmers must adopt new technologies that, supposedly, will increase their agricultural production. Both of these fundamental general assumptions are highly debatable. For one thing, they see poor farmers as a homogeneous group with the same needs and priorities when, in fact, they are individuals, each with a particular set of needs, desires, goals, and ideas as to how they would like to improve their lives.

For instance, even though increased yields might be a primary goal among most farmers, it might not necessarily be their overriding priority. Some farmers might be more interested in diversifying their production, protecting their natural resources, eliminating expensive and harmful inputs, increasing their leisure time, improving their family's nutrition, or any one of various other goals (Gow and Sant 1985:126). Landless farmers, on the other hand, make most of their meager income by cheaply selling their labor. Technologies that increase production are not particularly useful to them. They primarily need more sources of employment and policies that assure them better wages and labor

¹ An increase in income does not necessarily mean an improved life. It can sometimes result in increased alcohol consumption, gambling, or overspending.

benefits. ADOs are known to set what some call “nobody’s targets” by aiming to achieve specific quantifiable objectives that are only products of their creative imagination (Derclaye 1987:21). All this aside, even when both the ADO and the farmer agree on the goal of increasing production, they might disagree on the means to achieve it. Further, an increase in production might not necessarily bring an increase in income if the farmer does not have access to markets, or his surplus production spoils because he does not have appropriate means for storage or processing. Derclaye concludes that

Many project planners are being unrealistic in thinking they can start by assigning objectives to the...[poor farmers] different from those the farmers would choose for themselves, although they may well be ones that the farmers would adopt at a later stage. Producing for the town or for export would never come top of the farmers’ list (1987:21).

The assumption that new technology will bring about an increase in production is not always correct. Factors other than access to technology might limit productivity; for example lack of labor, time, or even weather patterns so that new technology might increase productivity only slightly, if at all. Agriculture is a very complex and unpredictable undertaking whose outputs are determined by a large number of factors of which technology is but one. Each area or geographical region has unique physical, social, and economic problems and opportunities.

This truism notwithstanding, ADOs have historically devised their work plans on the assumption that technologically-induced productivity increases can by themselves take peasants out of poverty. Thus, up to the 1970s, the main goal of ADOs was to increase food production through technological innovations. At the time, these innovations consisted of high yielding grain varieties, expanded use of chemical inputs (i.e., fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides), and

irrigation systems—the main elements of the actively promoted “Green Revolution” of the 1960s and 70s. In the 1980s, land conservation and physical sustainability of agricultural systems became another important goal. Because of the failure of Green Revolution technology to address the basic problems of poor farmers, there was a shift from the promotion of agricultural inputs to that of agricultural techniques such as soil and water conservation practices and organic agriculture techniques. In Honduras, for instance, although some NGOs emphasize the use of agricultural inputs such as improved seeds either donated or financed through credit, most emphasize training in new agricultural practices (Kaimowitz, et al. 1992:2).

Either in the form of agricultural inputs or new agricultural techniques, technology transfer remains the main thrust of ADOs. Most ADOs believe that technologies generated through scientific research can benefit large numbers of the rural poor (Vergara and MacDicken 1990), overlooking the fact that, historically, scientifically devised agricultural innovations have done just the opposite, increased the opportunities for more affluent farmers while drawing away resources from the poor. Besides, no single technological innovation or set of innovations has much chance of improving the lot of “large numbers” of poor rural farmers, considering their diverse needs and priorities.

Still, Bonilla Contreras, as chief of the agricultural research program of the SRN believes that the main objectives of an extension system should be “technology generation,...technological evaluation, and more effective transfer of technologies through a dynamic extension and evaluation that furthers the impact of the technological system” (1983:112). In this context, the basic working methodology of ADOs has been to develop an expertise in certain technological areas, or to develop certain technologies and then to attempt to convince farmers to accept them. Some NGOs work to promote a variety of technologies

encompassed in what is called *integrated sustainable agriculture*, but within this, they specialize in one or more fields. In Honduras, for instance, the Christian Development Commission promotes goats, Save the Children works in organic agriculture, small animal husbandry (mainly rabbits and fish), CARE specializes in agroforestry, and World Neighbors does much work with basic grains and vegetables.

Specialization is not necessarily bad, after all, the generation of new technology often comes from ADOs specialized in particular areas. But, it tends to drive ADO agents into trying to “promote”² their area of specialization into adoption by farmers. They have invested so much time and effort into developing their particular technological expertise that their first priority becomes to introduce their technology at practically any cost. A report by FOPRIDEH, an umbrella organization for over half of the Honduran NGOs, states that, “to get a peasant to adopt practices requires a direct promotion effort from NGOs” (Kaimowitz, et al. 1992:16). Often, this “effort” entails a sales pitch in which overselling of technology becomes a common phenomenon.

Agricultural development organizations feel that by offering the best and “latest” in agricultural innovations, it will be easier to convince the farmer to use it. Hence, they must have “something to offer that the farmer does not already have...it is critical for ...institutions to have new, improved, and readily implementable technologies to offer” (Vergara and MacDicken 1990:363). It is no accident that this paragraph sounds like a commercial. Most ADOs are in the business of selling their products (i.e., technological packages) to suspicious campesinos.³ On this point, Perrett, as consultant to the World Bank considers that one common objective of agricultural projects is to “influence what people

² The word “promote” is used extensively by ADOs, generally, as a euphemism for “push.”

³ This can also be seen in terms like “target clientele” often found in the literature when referring to potential farmer “beneficiaries.”

feel, believe or do" (1982:29) but concludes that "selling" projects is "obviously more difficult than selling commercial products, and requires adaptation of the concepts and techniques that have proved so successful in the business world" (Perrett 1982:7).

Of course, someone has to pay for these packages, not the farmers because they are too poor (though sometimes they are required to contribute part of the cost). Instead, the development costs of these packages are transferred to:

- a) International development institutions which, in turn, get their money from governments that, in turn, get their money from regular taxpayers. So taxpayers, mostly in the over-developed countries (ODCs), pick up the tab that keeps ADOs afloat.⁴
- b) NGOs who get most of their money from private groups, foundations, individuals, and international institutions. Again, the general populace of ODCs keeps bread on the table of development workers and fuel in the tanks of their 4WD vehicles.

In order to promote their valuable technologies, NGOs in Honduras use "the Project [as] the global planning tool [which is also]...used to get outside financing" (Kaimowitz, et al. 1992:1). By having projects that promote specific technologies and try to achieve specific quantifiable goals, NGOs hope to (and often do) attract outside financing. ADOs have assumed that the lack of technology is one of the main limitations campesinos face and, consequently, have designed agricultural development projects as the main vehicles of technology transfer. But, they have often encountered, perhaps unexpectedly, a major obstacle: the non-acceptance of their projects by intended "beneficiaries."

⁴ International financial institutions also get their money from many poor countries in the form of interest payments.

Technology transfer and the issue of "adoption"

A central long standing concern of agricultural development planners has been to get poor rural farmers to accept (adopt) their technological packages. Much time and energy has been spent on academic studies and field trials to attempt to understand why adoption is such an elusive goal (Feder, Just and Zilberman 1982; Hansen and Erbaugh 1987). Many professional developers are baffled by the fact that farmers do not readily adopt "marvelous" technologies designed by highly educated technocrats using the latest scientific research.

Vergara and MacDicken, representing the FAO observe, somewhat dispiritedly, that "for reasons that are not well understood, the *adoption* and application of new or improved agroforestry systems are not as widespread as policy planners and rural development strategists would wish" (1990:354). Yet they fail to question the validity of the concept of technology transfer itself. Instead, they see the problem as a lack of "vigorous efforts" on the part of extensionists and conclude that "better strategies need to be formulated...to enhance farmers' acceptance and adoption of appropriate agroforestry technology as widely and as rapidly as possible." (1990:355)

Speaking for the World Bank, Yudelman acknowledges, in a carefully worded understatement, that technology "acceptance" is actually related to the attainment of the World Bank's twin goals of "increase in output and incomes." But, he also has to admit how little the Bank understands the poor farmer's thinking who dares to question technology that is supposedly so potentially good for him: "The rate of acceptance [of new technology]...has a bearing on the rate of increase in output and incomes...this aspect of rural development is the crucial one. It is also the aspect about which the least seems to be known" (Yudelman 1979:18).

Many reasons make poor farmers reluctant to accept or adopt outside technological innovations, probably as many as there are farmers themselves. In this sense, the overconcern of development planners seems to be badly placed in an attempt to lump all rural farmers together when that is simply not possible. A beneficial shift in focus would draw project planners away from trying to develop technologies for farmers to encouraging them to develop, refine and adapt technologies (native or foreign) based on their needs and preferences. In this case, "acceptance" becomes a non-issue because the technologies would be the farmers' own, custom designed by them to fit their needs and desires, and probably as diverse as the farmers themselves.

The following examples from Honduras illustrate why adoption of foreign technologies, which for many ADOs has become an end in itself, is such a complex, difficult and often useless pursuit. The examples help demonstrate why it is almost impossible to prescribe pre-designed solutions to farmers' problems. Some examples also show how, even when adoption takes place, it does not necessarily have positive results.

Reasons for non-acceptance of new technologies:

The new technologies are too costly in terms of money, labor, or require much specialized knowledge and/or experience

In the community of Mojimán, Yoro (North Central Honduras), INA recently introduced small commercial watermelon projects. Several peasants said they were having troubles growing watermelons commercially because they "did not know how to grow watermelons. It's people from Copán [the western part of the country] who know all about watermelons" (Various Campesinos 1992). They also said that they had difficulties buying all the inputs that INA

recommended.⁵ INA will often finance the acquisition of these chemicals but this usually results in the campesino's acquiring a large debt. If the harvest is anything less than expected or if a calamity hits (droughts, floods, pests), not uncommon in Honduras, the campesino is left with a large debt and nothing to show for it. The campesinos would, most likely, not have chosen this project had they had the choice.

In this case, growing watermelons was imposed on farmers by INA in its effort to promote a new cash crop in the area. But the campesinos felt this was not the right crop for them because of their lack of familiarity with it and the large capital investment it entailed. On the other hand, farmers with experience in growing vegetables are often eager to get involved in commercial vegetable projects and are willing to "risk" relatively large capital investments because they rely on their skills to almost insure success.⁶ Hence, in places of vegetable growing tradition, ADO-sponsored commercial vegetable projects have generally been successful (Kaimowitz, et al. 1992:3).

The new technologies are flawed or oversold—fail to deliver

A group of women in the community of Mojimán grow corn and vegetables on collective land. They asked INA for technical and credit assistance on growing onions and other vegetables for commercial purposes. INA answered by proposing a project of its own that, it believed, the women would profit from. It involved setting up and caring for a tree nursery where they would grow mainly fruit and ornamental trees for sale. After a few months of operation, the nursery looked good, superficially. It had a good, fairly expensive wooden fence, good roof protection where needed, good stands for seedlings, a large supply of black

⁵ INA usually recommends large applications of chemical inputs which tend to be fairly expensive.

⁶ Contrast this with the "risk-averse campesino" stereotype.

plastic seedling bags, and a number of other details that gave the impression of a well financed project. Yet, there were very few seedlings growing, and many of those growing looked sick and uncared for. One woman said unapologetically that they never really wanted that project, but INA told them they were going to make a large profit, that it was easy, and that they would provide the funding to get it going. Once the project started, however, the demand for trees was not as high as expected and the work was more demanding than anticipated. Since most of the women were not interested in the project to begin with, they always had excuses not to show up to plant seedlings, water the trees, or do other routine maintenance chores. (Various Campesinos 1992) The nursery project that INA had depicted so optimistically became yet another outside-planned project gone sour.

In other cases, agricultural projects proposed by outsiders often fail to deliver as promised not because of social, cultural, or institutional constraints, but because of inherent flaws in the technologies themselves. Concerning agroforestry—often lauded as a panacea for rural agricultural problems—Gregersen and McGaughey point out that although it can increase “the land productivity in many areas...it is not the answer to every problem and suffers from being oversold by its proponents in some instances” (1987:11).

Accordingly, one finds that forestation (in the form of agroforestry, plantations, or others) does not necessarily provide all the benefits that popular wisdom ascribes to it. For instance, Hamilton and Pearce (1987) assert that very little evidence supports the claim that large scale forestation results in increased rainfall in a given area. In an interesting exposition, they argue that other claims concerning benefits of forestation such as prevention of sedimentation in streams, lakes and reservoirs, prevention of floods, and increased water availability in bodies of water are simply not backed up by scientific and experimental

evidence. In some cases, forests play only minimal roles in addressing these problems. In other cases, they can even cause effects opposite to those expected such as the lowering of stream flows and water tables because of the water requirements of the trees themselves. Even erosion control, long lauded as one of the principal benefits of tree planting, is debated, the argument being that only when you have a well developed understory can you provide true erosion protection. This is not true for most plantations and agroforestry systems. Some of the scant systematic observations done in the tropics surprisingly show that forest plantations (with tree litter burned or removed) and taungya agroforestry cultivations result in higher average rates of erosion than shifting cultivation itself! Hamilton and Pearce conclude that “tree planting alone has not been shown to increase local rainfall, to prevent floods, to increase the flow of streams and springs, or to raise well levels” (1987:53).

Miscellaneous, hardly predictable circumstances work against adoption of new technologies

Goat Raising

El Tablón is a well integrated and organized small community of about 200 people. About two years ago, the Christian Development Commission (CDC) wanted to introduce goat raising into this community because goat raising is one CDC’s technical expertises and because goats tend to do well in dry areas with poor soils which is the case of El Tablón. Lacking previous experience with goats, the community started a goat raising project with the help of CDC. Now that CDC has left, goat reproduction is out of control and the community has so many, they don’t know what to do with them. Some people use goat milk to feed their babies—who could probably benefit more from their mothers’ milk. But, older children and adults don’t drink the milk or eat the meat. They don’t

like the taste of the milk and don't know how to prepare the meat, and besides, they don't want to kill the goats because it saddens them to hear them moan in an almost human fashion when being killed. Since the goats wander about loose, not even their excrement is used as fertilizer, and their grazing adds to the already serious land erosion problems the community faces. Even though CDC promoted the multi-use of goats, they are now seen more as a nuisance than a resource.

On the other hand, the dissemination of goats in southern Honduras has been much more successful because that area has a goat raising tradition. (García Henríquez 1992) So, by providing goats in southern Honduras, NGOs such as CDC are providing a service to people who already know and desire it, whereas in northern Honduras, the NGO is only trying to promote or "push" its ideas.

Other possible reasons why adoption of a project's technology might not necessarily benefit poor farmers include:

- the new technologies cover non-priority needs or its objectives do not coincide with the farmers'.
- farmers agree with the objectives of outside projects but not with the means.
- the main limiting factor is not lack of technology.
- poor results or losses result from lack of commitment to the project.

Also, externally conceived projects often create dependency, stunt creativity, take farmers away from more important concerns, and/or fail to promote long term improvement

The above examples depict the contrasting results ADOs obtain when trying to impose their designs and when, on the other hand, they let beneficiaries make their own decisions. To further illustrate this point and to show how even within

one organization these two diametrically opposed approaches will yield equally diametrically opposed results, the experience of a local Honduran NGO will now be considered.

Case Study: ODEF

In the last few years, ODEF has worked in two areas of rural development: small business development and integrated rural development. The latter includes work in sustainable agriculture, nutrition and appropriate technologies. ODEF's work in small business development has been considered successful while that in the other areas has met with repeated failures. Yet, in both cases ODEF has worked with the same communities and with the same personnel. The difference in results can be explained by the different working philosophy that ODEF has used to address the needs of the beneficiaries in each case.

In the area of business development ODEF provides resources and other assistance that the beneficiaries use as they see fit to improve the businesses they have chosen to run. ODEF limits its role to provide financial support services (credit, business training and technical assistance) to low income small rural businesswomen. This endeavor has been quite successful in the sense that loan repayment rates have been high (99.8%), the women have expanded their businesses, increased their profits and spent on family needs such as health and education. In contrast to its work in small business development, ODEF has, with little success, implemented a top-down technology transfer approach in the areas of sustainable agriculture nutrition and appropriate technologies. Thus, ODEF provides an interesting case study of how an ADO can have remarkably different results in its outreach development activities by applying different philoso-

phies concerning the degree of control it chooses to exercise over the beneficiaries. Some specific examples follow.

Biodigestors

ODEF has tried to promote biodigestors along with pig raising projects among rural women. A few years ago, it financed the construction of small biodigestors so that women could use the excrement from their pigs to produce natural gas for cooking. At first when offered the hardware and the financing, the women were enthusiastic about producing their own energy. But, a few months later, the biodigestors lay in disuse. ODEF's endeavor failed because women could not stand the smell of the pig excrement they had to collect and shovel into the biodigestor on a daily basis. They found it easier (and more agreeable) to wash the pigsties with a hose or a bucket of water. The small biodigestors were gradually abandoned. (Aguilar Escoto 1992) Did the women fully understand what was involved before they decided to participate in the biodigestor program? How much did they actually participate in the planning of this program?

Vegetable Gardens

Establishment of home vegetable gardens is the second biggest area of agricultural extension work in Honduras (next to soil conservation). The main stated objective of ADOs promoting home gardens is to improve family nutrition. Home gardens are usually promoted by handing out seeds and other inputs, along with informal training and follow-up visits. This methodology tends to create reliance on the NGO to carry out the project. Thus, when the NGO diminishes its level of support, or leaves, gardens are often abandoned (Kaimowitz, et al. 1992:17).

In 1990, ODEF decided it would be a good idea to promote home vegetable gardens among their beneficiaries. The promotion work included giving talks,

training and seeds to forty beneficiaries who agreed to participate in the project. A year later, only two or three gardens survived. Though adequate and timely follow-up was deficient in this project, the main reason for its failure was that the beneficiaries were never really interested in the idea. They accepted the project in the first place because ODEF made it easy by helping them set up their gardens and giving them training and seeds. But once the gardens were established and ODEF left the participants on their own, they soon ran into problems (as would be expected since gardening was a new experience to most of them) and quickly gave up. Those who had kept up the gardens probably believed in them from the very beginning or even before ODEF proposed them. Those few gardens that had been kept were generally very well cared for. Effort and ingenuity had been put into them. One, for instance, had an intricate wooden fence for which the wood had to be hauled from a distance; another had a live fence made from pineapple plants that effectively kept chickens and pigs out.

Those who abandoned their gardens offered many explanations ranging from having too many rocks or shade in their plots, to diseases, lack of seeds, and family problems.⁷ It's easy for anyone to be stopped by an obstacle when s/he does not really care about a project. On the other hand, when people really believe in a project they will not need extension workers to make them do it well because they will care for it and have the initiative to ask for help when they need it.

ODEF's original goal was to increase the nutritional value of the campesinos' diet. Although most campesinos would agree with this goal, they would not necessarily agree with the means to achieve it. Surveys have found that campesinos believe the best way to improve their diets is to eat more animal

⁷ A beneficiary had a peculiar difficulty to resolve. Here's his account: "When my tomatoes were very big, my mom hit them with a machete (*me los macheteó*) because she had a problem with me and she got so mad that she took it out on the plants."

products such as eggs, milk, and meat (McCulloch and Futrell 1988:192).

Considering that their diet is so deficient in high quality protein, calcium and vitamins found in animal products, this is not such a bad assessment.⁸

Solar Cookers

Since 1990, ODEF has been promoting the use of Solar Box Cookers, a simple technology—basically a cardboard box with a glass cover and a reflector lid wrapped with aluminum paper. They trap the sun's energy to cook virtually any type of food, and can be used most of the year in the hot tropics. What could be better? Yet, after two years of promotion, for various reasons, very few women with whom ODEF works have adopted them. For one thing, the cookers take a long time to cook, not necessarily a problem if they could be left unattended. But, in northern Honduras rains often come quickly, heavily and unexpectedly and a cardboard cooker caught in the rain is ruined. This would be a quite substantial loss because, contrary to what is advertised, the cookers are neither easy to make nor inexpensive. As they are currently promoted in Honduras, under the auspices of Solar Box Cookers International (SBCI), they require fairly expensive materials that are not normally accessible in the rural area such as a glass plate, aluminum foil, and silicone sealant (to glue and seal the glass to the box). Thus, they are beyond the means of the target population: poor campesino women.

ODEF makes these cookers in the city and sells them to beneficiaries for approximately \$30 each just to cover costs. For about the same price, they can buy a small one burner electric stove, generally preferred because it is faster, more reliable, more durable, and better known (i.e., "easier to operate"). Another less expensive option is also available. For about half the price of a solar cooker rural

⁸ It is difficult enough to convince many North Americans of the value of eating "greens and vegetables" even though they are supposedly well aware of it.

women can have their *fogón*⁹ redesigned to be twice as efficient. The most popular energy efficient design for fogones is the “lorena stove.” The idea is to rebuild the fogón so that it will let escape as little heat as possible. This is achieved by closing up the stove as much as possible, using special heat ducts to conduct the heat to the burners, and by adding a smoke stack. Rural women accept this alternative more readily because it does not greatly depart from what they are currently using, it is relatively inexpensive, and eliminates the problems of excessive heat and smoke in the kitchen, the two main reasons why women are dissatisfied with traditional fogones in Honduras. Another advantage of redesigned fogones is that peasant women can have them custom made to suit their needs and preferences. Some communities have local artisans who know how to design these. ODEF helps finance the redesign of fogones when the women request it but does not actively promote them, for reasons explained shortly, as much as it does the solar cookers.

Another reason why solar cookers have not found wide acceptance is that firewood producing trees and shrubs grow and reproduce fairly quickly in the area.¹⁰ So, although firewood is not in ample abundance, its relatively adequate supply makes its substitution not a priority among rural women. It should also be noted that many women might prefer to keep their traditional fogones to solar cookers or even redesigned fogones because they have fashioned their cooking styles by feeling the heat and observing the flames in the fogones, something they cannot do with the other alternatives¹¹ (Recinos C. 1991).

⁹ A *fogón* is the traditional, highly inefficient, open burning clay hearth used for cooking in rural Honduras.

¹⁰ The *madriado* (*Clyricidia sepium*), for instance, is a widely used fast growing native species that produces good fuel wood with a high caloric content and has the ability to coppice. It is often used as stakes for fencing. Fuelwood can be harvested in a short time as stakes grow into young trees with many branches a few months after planting.

¹¹ Some women say that food cooked in traditional fogones “just tastes better.”

Besides, they might have more important concerns than improving their fonges.

Even though most extensionists at ODEF realize that these solar cookers are not accepted by, nor appropriate to most beneficiaries, they continue to reluctantly promote them because it is one of ODEF's programs. ODEF continues to promote them because it receives a grant from SBCI to continue this work (Escoto Meraz 1992). Also, the project looks good in the eyes of current and potential donors who might want to fund an organization working in the area of environmental protection. In short, the project is good public relations, and pays for itself. If not for those two factors, it would have probably been scrapped long ago.

The solar box cookers example demonstrates three problems concerning top-down technology transfer and the issue of adoption. First, this technology was too costly. Second, alternative, more appropriate, and less expensive technologies were available. Third, the purpose of this technology (to reduce firewood consumption) was not as important to the locals as it probably was to the technology proponents—North American environmentalists. By trying to promote an unwanted technology, developers are wasting both their and the campesinos' time.

While these two examples demonstrate ODEF's failures in one area of its work, the other area, small business development, is considered highly successful. Take for instance one of the main programs of ODEF, the Village Banks and Training Program. This program provides small loans to poor rural women while allowing them to make their own decisions. A brief description of the program follows.

Village Banks and Training

First, ODEF identifies villages with women who run small enterprises (e.g., making cheese, baking bread, growing and selling vegetables, making handicrafts). Typically, a village will ask to be informed about the possibility of participating in the program. ODEF then sends a representative to explain how the program works: ODEF gives one large loan to a group of women. These women, about twenty in the average, make up a "village bank." The bank as a group decides which community members could best use a small loan in a successful venture.

The women come together and share their ideas about how they wish to expand and/or improve their activities with the available loan funds (about \$100 per person). With the help of ODEF, these ideas are formalized into short business plans. All the women are interested in the viability of all the plans because they are responsible as a group to repay the entire loan, not just their portion. They help each other and build community. Prior to this experience most of them have never been involved in any organized community activity.

When the plans are acceptable to all the participants, a credit committee chosen by members of the bank gives final approval to the plans. Then, an ODEF representative will train them in aspects of business development, in the use of credit, and in the methods of operating the bank. After the loans are distributed, ODEF is available to offer consulting for the new businesses. Women borrowers are elected by the overall group to be officers and managers of the bank and receive additional training from ODEF. Thus, this all-volunteer bank is effectively run by the peasant women themselves. Upon repayment of a loan at the end of a loan cycle, the funds become available to be re-loaned to the same borrowers to carry on their small enterprises. In the existing village banks the women are

investing wisely, making payments on schedule and maintaining organized bank records.

In this program the village participants make the main decisions because they are creating the business plans and ideas for which the loans are to be employed. This is the main reason for their success. The program leaves the major decisions (what to sell, how much, where, how to use the money, etc.) in the hands of the women while ODEF acts only as a resource that they can use to obtain funds and assistance in technical matters.. As stated by Katalysis (a North American support organization for ODEF), "The approach is based on the conviction that people will take an active responsibility for making a project succeed only when they 'buy into' that project, i.e., when they help formulate its goals, participate in its design and management, and have an economic stake in its risks and rewards." The women are the protagonists of a project sponsored, but not owned, by ODEF. The Village Banks and Training program helps women organize and work together, effectively putting the power back into their hands.

The contrast between ODEF's Village Banking program approach and that of most other ADO programs is striking. It should be noted that, before embarking into top-down technology transfer programs, ODEF never had to preoccupy itself with the problem of adoption. Now, it has to dedicate considerable resources to it. Thus, one main advantage of the approach used in the Village Banking program is that resources can be used where they are needed the most instead of being wasted in the attempt to induce farmers to "accept" ODEF's projects. Besides, in its Village Banking program, ODEF does not squander its capabilities in developing unneeded resources such as technical expertise, a specialized staff and a complex administrative structure needed to design and run elaborate projects.

Another important strength of the Village Banking program's approach is that it instills a sense of community because the women are working together and, in this way, creating social structures that can address other community problems such as water projects, schools, roads, a community center, etc. With the confidence and organization gained from helping each other, they are in a position to ask for help from other types of funders or from the government to solve a variety of community problems

The project-based method used by most ADOs, on the other hand, has basically two major flaws. First, it focuses on the transfer of technology which, as previously described, is often not accepted by campesinos, and even when accepted, does not necessarily bring long lasting benefits to the communities. Second, this method concentrates in achieving individual project success stories¹² instead of building the capacity of beneficiaries to take upon themselves the entire process of project design and implementation so as to enhance their capacity to confront powerful forces in their struggle for their interests. In short, ADOs concentrate on developing physical and technical resources instead of developing human resources. At the same time, the present approach does little to address fundamental issues at the root of the ever deteriorating conditions of the rural poor.

¹² The reasons for this are varied but trying to impress donors and feeling a sense of satisfaction over having achieved something tangible in a short period stand out as two of the main ones.

CHAPTER 5: THE ROLE OF ADOs IN THE UNDERLYING ISSUES AFFECTING THE POOR

ADO Support: Who gets it?

ADOs and the Landless

ADOs in Honduras mostly support landed peasants who own small to medium farms (Kaimowitz, et al. 1992:1; Stonich 1992:397). The World Bank, for instance, concentrates on the landed poor because of its inability to develop “conventional” projects for the landless (Yudelman 1985:23). As noted earlier, the landless, who are in general the poorest of the poor, make up more than half of the rural population (Barry 1991:309); for this reason, their needs cannot be overlooked. Landless peasants, also make up the core of most grass roots peasant organizations (Daugherty 1989:63). This group relies heavily on off-farm employment for its survival. Stonich (1992:396) remarks that, more than technological fixes to increase agricultural productivity, the landless need economic alternatives that enhance opportunities for the acquisition of off-farm income. Of course, they also need to gain greater access to productive land.

ADOs and Indigenous Grass-Roots Groups

Many ADOs (particularly NGOs) do support grass roots groups, yet many others prefer to organize their own groups even when organized groups already exist in the communities. For instance, Alvarado (1987:103) complains that the Peace Corps refuses to work with grass root groups because they have “too many problems.” She adds that if outside groups “really want to have most impact, they’d be working with the organized groups of campesinos...[but, instead,] they don’t bother working with the structures we’re struggling so hard to set up” (103). Many ADOs prefer to organize groups who will support their

projects by, for example, fostering “the diffusion of their technical support, [which is usually] limited to activities decided” by the ADOs themselves (Derclaye 1987:19).

Instead, ADOs should help local groups in their efforts to achieve “greater political and economic leverage” (Stonich 1992:396). Because of their greater access to resources, the support of ADOs can enhance the ability of local groups to “exercise influence over local administrators and assert claims on government[,] adapt project activities to local conditions[,] and manage the natural resource base rationally through education and training” (Stonich 1992:396). It is not enough to involve local individuals in the planning of development programs. Grass-roots organizations also need to be included and strengthened because “stable forms of peasant self-organization” are more likely to build participation in the long run, and thus, be more effective in mobilizing peasant efforts towards attaining sustainability in the long run (Cernea 1992:39-40).

Fundamental Factors of Poverty and Powerlessness

Generally Overlooked by ADOs

The worsening economic and social conditions for the majority of Hondurans arise from the fact that the underlying reasons for poverty and underdevelopment remain virtually intact despite years of massive “development” aid. Most ADOs fail to address the fundamental causes of poverty and their occasional involvement does not always favor the poor.

Land Tenure Patterns, Land Quality, and Land Security

As noted earlier, the agrarian reform program has had an insignificant effect on the distribution of land in Honduras. Like most Latin American countries,

Honduras suffers from a highly skewed land tenure pattern. Sixty-four percent of the farms possess less than 5 hectares and cover merely 9.1 percent of the farm land while 1.7 percent of the farms have more than 100 hectares and cover 44 percent of the farm land (Daugherty 1989:115). The so called, agrarian reform has served more as a social buffer to quiet down the most "troublesome" campesino groups. Real reform remains a distant goal.

The little land that the agricultural reform program has distributed, for instance, has been mostly marginal government land that no one else wanted. Besides, the agrarian reform has provided very few services to its beneficiaries. In this context, by 1989, only 45 percent (Daugherty 1989:64) of the land given to peasants through the agrarian reform program had been put to productive use mainly because of a lack of infrastructure, credit, technical assistance, and the bad quality of the land itself. Many reform beneficiaries simply abandoned or sold their land to look for other means of livelihood. In some areas the desertion rate is as high as 44 percent (Daugherty 1989:68).

A skewed land tenure pattern is not necessarily detrimental if the population has access to means of livelihood not dependent on the land and if the unemployment rate is relatively low. But, as noted earlier, Honduras has a highly agrarian economy and most of its population depends on agriculture while the rural unemployment and underemployment rates are extremely high. With that in mind, however, probably more oppressive than the skewed land tenure pattern itself is the fact that campesinos have the most marginal land for agriculture. Thus, not only do large landlords have the most land, they have the best land. Finally, even this could be (if ever so remotely) justified if this quality land was put to good use, but a 1984 study found that only 32 percent of arable land was being used for agriculture. (CIM 1984:70) Most of the good agricultural land is either idle or used to graze a few heads of cattle.

More than half of Honduran campesinos also face the problem of lacking documents to verify their ownership of land. In most instances, they occupy public lands as squatters (Stringer 1989:363). Thus, they can be easily evicted, and often are, when more powerful landowners become interested in their land.

Education

In 1988, only 27 percent of Honduran children who enrolled in the first grade finished their elementary education (Maradiaga Díaz 1990:32). Fifty-four percent of children 14 and older had never been enrolled in school (Maradiaga Díaz 1990:55). These estimates are for the general population; but in the rural area the educational situation is much worse. Eighty-four percent of all children who drop out of school and 64 percent of those who fail to pass their grades are from rural areas. Many rural children repeat grades over and over again until they are finally expelled from the system.

The drop in the illiteracy rate was insignificant between 1973 and 1989 in Honduras, falling only from about 42 percent to about 40 percent (Annis 1992:184). Most of the illiteracy is still in the rural area where the rate runs as high as 84 percent. Education in Honduras is not a right but a privilege "because of the lack of schools, the poor quality of public education, and the prohibitive cost of educational materials" (Barry 1991:316).

Campesinos also have little access to training on administrative, organizational, community planning, communication, and related skills that could help them in their efforts to find solutions to their own problems.

Roads and Transportation

The lack of roads, bridges, and transportation systems greatly hinders the ability of campesinos to market their products and to acquire agricultural inputs.

Paved highways and other well kept roads serve primarily the urban areas and those that produce goods for export in a commercial basis. On the other hand, Lempira, Intibucá, and Gracias a Dios, three of the poorest *departamentos*¹ have no paved roads at all. Most rural areas in general are difficult to access. Small rural communities can be reached only by vehicles with four wheel drive, and often only by foot or horseback. In these areas, public transportation is usually nonexistent, and in the best cases, highly irregular. During the rainy season, when rivers rise, many communities whose access route crosses waterways, become effectively cut off.

In a country smaller than the state of Pennsylvania, it takes two days to get from San Pedro Sula (the second largest city in Honduras) to the small rural town of Candelaria (a straight line distance of about 110 miles) using public transportation and quite a bit of walking. From Candelaria, which can only be reached by 4WD vehicles, it takes another half day to reach campesino settlements in an area which can only be reached by foot or horseback. When campesinos from these communities need to go to Tegucigalpa (the capital city), it is easier and faster for them to go through El Salvador,² which has better roads, even though they have to cover a distance almost twice as long.

Alvarado explains one instance of how the lack of roads directly hurts the campesinos:

The guys with the fat wallets, the middlemen, come into the village and buy the campesinos' crops for next to nothing. But the campesinos need the money and have no choice. Who else can they sell to? How can they get their crops to market? There are no roads to their villages, no buses that stop there. The only transportation is their mules and their own backs (1987:20).

¹ Honduras is divided into eighteen departamentos. The departamentos in the western and far eastern part of the country are the poorest and largely lack basic infrastructure.

² Candelaria is in southwestern Honduras, near the Salvadoran border.

Credit

Traditional peasant farmers do not benefit from marketing, transportation and credit services. Since they cannot afford to store their grains at harvest time when prices are depressed, and since they cannot get their product directly to the markets, they often have to sell to intermediaries at whatever low prices they can get. They use the money for basic necessities such as clothing and medicines. It is often the case that some time later they need to buy grains since they sold most of their production to satisfy more urgent needs. This time they buy their grains at much higher prices since it is the off-season and they are contributing to the profits of intermediaries. If they don't have enough money, as it usually happens, they have to borrow from local loan sharks at outrageous interest rates (sometimes in the hundreds) (Rochac 1983:152).

In another common situation, usurers own small stores to provide basic necessities to peasants including food, medicines, and tools. The peasants buy these products on credit and, at harvest time, have to turn in part (or sometimes all) of their production at prices dictated by the usurer. Again, they end up paying outrageous interests for the credit received (Rochac 1983:152). According to Elvia Alvarado (1987:19), "the campesinos are always selling cheap and buying dear. That's why they never get ahead."

As a sign of just how important credit is to campesinos, a 1981 survey (Stringer 1989:375-376) of 271 reform sector campesinos found that over a one year period, 182 (67 percent) had turned to informal credit and borrowed cash from either moneylenders or friends in the form of in-kind advances or forward sales in order to meet personal, medical or agricultural needs.

Being poor, campesinos have no access to credit from commercial banks. Even government development agencies fail to provide them with credit and instead, support the more powerful farmers of the export sector. Only 30 percent of campesinos in the reform sector, with more access to government credit than any other peasant sector, get credit (Valeriano 1983:95). Whatever credit campesinos get generally comes in the paternalistic form of loans with unrealistically low interest rates—a form of handouts provided by ADOs as aids to transfer particular technologies. With this practice, ADOs actually undermine rural development because they concentrate on providing cheap credit instead of attempting to build the beneficiaries' loan repayment capacity. This is an important reason for the high default rate among poor farmers.

Even after they receive loans, the odds are heavily stacked against poor farmers because they might be planting impoverished land, lack proper agricultural infrastructure, access to information, or to proper markets. Loans are generally aimed at the implementation of a specific technological package and do not cover all the other factors that work against poor farmer agriculture. Furthermore, campesinos regularly get loans larger than they have the ability to pay back only because the credit is cheap. Upon defaulting, their credit rating is ruined and they have difficulty getting additional loans. But, what is more important, campesino communities are left with no self-sustained financial institutions that can be a source of healthy, reliable credit for a long time to come. Their abilities to save and to manage credit have been not enhanced but degraded. By concentrating on handing out loans instead of trying to build the strength of rural financial markets with policies such as mobilizing savings and improving the financial viability of borrowers, ADOs actually weaken the capacity of rural people to establish and benefit from financial institutions directly aimed at them (Blair 1984:185).

It could be argued that cheap credits are not meant to be like regular credits, that instead, they are a kind of bonus, a stimulus to help the neediest farmers get on their feet. Yet, cheap credit cannot even be viewed as charity because most of it does not even reach the poor. Because of the high demand for soft credits, public credit agencies in charge of handing them out screen applicants and award them to those who present the least risk with the result that wealthier farmers get most of the loans and the largest amounts (Blair 1984:187).³ For instance, in 1984, BANADESA, the government agricultural bank, gave 79 percent of its loans to cattle ranchers. Only 15 percent went to agriculture. In 1986, cattle ranchers received 58 percent of the government's agricultural budget resources (Daugherty 1989:67).

Communication & Information

Poor campesinos often lack critical information that could guide them in making important decisions such as what and when to plant, where to sell, what price to set, etc. Some of the important information that the campesino usually lacks is:

- Regular weather and harvesting forecasts.
- Information on market conditions.
- Market analysis and feasibility studies.
- Periodic and trustworthy information on the prices of their products including domestic and foreign price trends.
- Other information to make proper buying-selling decisions. (Montes 1983:126-127)

According to Ardón, the campesino "tills, plants, and harvests without ever knowing the price of his product" (Montes 1983:125). Statistical information, for instance, is kept by government agencies, but rarely offered to those who need

³ Favoritism and political clout also plays a major role in this process.

it. (CIM 1984) Lastly, isolated farmers rarely communicate with other farmers from different parts of the country who may face similar problems and challenges.

Lack of Control over the Means of Production

Most of those campesinos who can produce a surplus are merely producers and suppliers of raw products. While they may produce coffee, sugar cane, vegetables, fruits or other marketable products, they usually lack the ability to store, process, and market them. They sell their unprocessed products at low prices to those who process and commercialize them and, consequently, keep most of the profits. As Santos Valeriano, a peasant with ANACH, the largest Honduran peasant organization put it:

We want not only land, credit, and technical assistance, we want to establish the necessary enterprises to process the raw materials we produce. Otherwise, we'll always be enslaved to those with money. For instance, the sugar mills set the price [for our product]...they control everything. What are we then? Just producers? Perhaps, the man who used to own the land we work today has become an associate of the sugar mill and all that's changed for him is that he no longer needs to look for laborers. The [raw] product is delivered to him and he keeps all the profits...[That is why] we are trying to obtain all the means of production...so that we can control everything for our benefit because, [as it is now,] what we produce with our labor is not ours...we produce raw materials to be delivered. (Valeriano 1983:96-97)

Macroeconomic Policies

Macroeconomic policies tend to favor the urban area at the expense of the rural area because of the greater economic clout and more vocal and "closer to home" demands of the urban population.⁴ For instance, inflation has decreased the purchasing power of rural inhabitants more than that of urbanites because

⁴ Large farmers, especially cattle ranchers, are an exception to this rule. Because of their economic and political power (many large landlords hold or have held high offices in the army and/or the government), they have some of the most influential lobbying associations in the country.

prices of nonagricultural products have increased faster than agricultural products—some of which have even faced a decline (Stonich 1992:387). Government policies keep prices of agricultural products artificially low to benefit urban dwellers.

Privileges Are Worth More Than Rights

An unfortunate legacy of Latin America's colonial past is the prevalence of classism in Latin American societies where the privileges of a few override the rights of the many. Privilege stems from the concentration of political and economic power and is fiercely protected by the ruling elites. ADOs, particularly international institutions, contribute to this situation by choosing to channel most of their funds through central governments. In Honduras, the central government is an extension of the elites that work to maintain their privileges, and consequently, the status quo. To illustrate, most low interest agricultural credits from international institutions, meant to help small farmers, invariably end up in the hands of big farmers with government connections and the ability to bribe and to exert political pressure. Blair submits that "politics is the main reason for the persistence of subsidized credit. The large borrowers who gain most from cheap credit want to protect that benefit, and at the same time politicians and bureaucrats want the power and the fruits of corruption that these programs put into their hands" (1984:184). ADOs generally allow national governments to assume the responsibility of maintaining and operating the infrastructure they fund instead of placing it on the hands of "local governments and grass roots organizations that benefit from these services" (Lele and Jain 1992:580). As could be expected, this misplacement of responsibility generally results in inadequate and inefficient management of the infrastructure.

The combination of these and other factors (other areas where campesinos have little or no access are: markets, storage, threshing services, low cost agricul-

tural inputs, agricultural infrastructure, price control policies, and legal counseling) reduce the campesinos to powerlessness and put them at the mercy of circumstances beyond their control condemning them to perpetual poverty.

Campesinos and the Export Sector

Some authors contend that campesinos can improve their income in the long run only by shifting from growing basic grains to growing other, more remunerative, crops such as export crops (Tucker 1992; Wingert 1983). The argument is well founded considering that export crops constitute a full 66 percent of the aggregate value of Honduran agricultural products while basic grain crops constitute only 15 percent (Noé Pino and Perdomo 1990:90). This difference is due, undoubtedly, to the much higher value of export crops. Others believe that food self-sufficiency is essential for any country, particularly poor agrarian countries, and the cultivation of basic grains plays a major role in achieving this goal.⁵ Attempting to resolve this debate is beyond the scope of this paper, but it would be useful to assume for a moment that campesinos can indeed benefit from a shift to export agriculture.

In this case, campesinos are ill equipped to even begin to compete with larger farmers. Export products are often fragile and require special handling and expedient transportation. They may require richer land, consume more water, and be more susceptible to pests and diseases than traditional staple crops so that additional fertilizers, irrigation, and pest control measures might be needed. Further, well maintained access roads, reliable transportation, access to markets and access to storage and processing facilities are invariably needed to be successful export producers. As stated earlier, campesinos lack most, if not all, of

⁵ Yet, some countries have adopted neither view and have, instead, looked to industrialize by processing their agricultural exports and developing import-substituting industries. (Lele and Jain 1992:585-586)

these basic resources. This puts them at a clear disadvantage. Thus, the benefits of the export market, which enjoys many incentives from the current government, are beyond their reach.

Partly due to these incentives, the export sector has experienced growth in Honduras but because of the factors outlined above, the more this sector grows, the greater the concentration of the production and benefits is in the hands of larger producers and multinational agribusinesses who enjoy better access to resources while small farmers never make it into or are forced out of the business (Stonich 1992:386). For example, the expansion of the export sector in Southern Honduras including beef, cotton and sugar has resulted in more acute land concentration by removing "peasants from the land and...land from peasant access" (Boyer 1986:15). Unfortunately, ADOs have played an important role in this process.

By supporting land and capital intensive export production such as beef and shrimp production, USAID and the World Bank have helped displace small farmers (Stonich 1992). The World Bank has been a major supporter of the expansion of cattle raising in the area. Between 1960 and 1983 more than half (57 percent) of all the World Bank loans for rural development in Central America supported beef production for export (Stonich 1992:389). Honduran large landlords have taken advantage of the impetus provided by cattle programs. To avoid expropriation under the Honduran land reform program, they have fenced and stocked with cattle previously idle land to claim it is being used productively (Stonich 1992:389). With the encouragement of ADOs such as the World Bank, the government looks benignly upon these tactics and accepts them as valid under the agrarian reform law. The expansion of cattle ranching in the 1970s intensified deforestation, the expulsion of small farmers from their lands and, consequently, land concentration. In a similar fashion, since the early 1980s, the

rapid expansion of shrimp farms in Southern Honduras,⁶ in what has come to be known as the “shrimp boom” supported by USAID (Stonich 1992:392), has led to the deforestation of thousands of hectares of mangrove forests, the displacement of local peasants and artisan fishermen, and the increased concentration of land (Stonich 1992:393).

The above exposition demonstrates that lack of technology, though sometimes an important factor affecting the agricultural systems of the poor, is only one element of a complex picture. A combination of underlying factors keep campesinos in poverty by depriving them of opportunities to prosper. Yet, ADOs continue to concentrate on technology transfer to improve the agriculture and, ostensibly, the quality of life of poor peasants. Added to that is the practice of concentrating on projects that treat campesinos only as mindless implementors with the net result that ADOs fail to address the larger issues that often neutralize their efforts, and fail to provide campesinos with the tools they need to make their voice heard in the general society.

ADOs seem to believe that social and political factors are outside their jurisdiction and thus, choose to focus on “non-risky” or “neutral” work such as technology transfer. Thereby, they indirectly, and perhaps unintentionally, contribute to maintaining the status quo by introducing a few superficial changes while everything else stays the same. However, recent efforts in Honduras are attempting to implement a new philosophy by which the ADO relinquishes some of its power and plays a supporting rather than a leading role in the development act. The case of the Margoas Program will be considered next.

⁶ Between 1980 and 1987 shrimp and shellfish products went from seventh to third among the principal agricultural exports experiencing an increase of more than 100 percent in their export value (Stonich 1992:388).

The Margoas Program:

A Model of the Potential Role of ADOs in Poor Farmer Development

An innovative program that could serve as a model for campesino-ADO cooperation is being implemented in southwestern Honduras. The Swiss-sponsored Margoas program (named after its two regions of operation: Marcala and Goascorán) is based on two fundamental principles. First, development should attempt to increase the farmers' "feeling of responsibility," so that the "development of things (health, roads, production) [is] merely a lever and a means for the development of people." In addition, farmer's organizations are to be considered partners in development and not merely "implementers or beneficiaries of operations belonging to the programme" (Derclaye 1987:22). For this reason, the program establishes a contractual relationship with the farmers. This contract originates by establishing how the farmers' priority demands can be met with the resources available to the program (Derclaye 1987:12). The program respects indigenous organizations as equal partners in development. It views indigenous organizations not as contact points to help it advance its projects, but as groups for self-expression, as places for knowledge and economic accumulation (Derclaye 1987:9). Further, the Margoas program envisions the functions of these organizations and its interactions with them as explained below.

The work of the program begins by opening a dialogue with the participants in an effective search for solutions to the farmers' problems. Peasant organizations analyze their situation and prioritize their problems. They present these problems and their proposed solutions to the program. The program does its own analysis of the problems and either: a) agrees with the proposed solution, b) modifies the proposed solution, or c) presents a different solution altogether. If there is no complete agreement on the solutions, the peasants and the program

personnel enter into a dialogue to achieve consensus on the best solution. After reaching agreement, the two parties get down to business, each providing its own resources. In short, indigenous organizations serve as forums for dialogue where farmers can express themselves, analyze and synthesize their experiences, and make decisions concerning the best courses of action to take for their collective benefit.

Indigenous organizations also serve to increase the farmers' management capacity as they assume responsibility to implement the projects they have themselves initiated. Thus, the organization becomes the structure through which farmers gain experience in "analysing situations, identifying problems and priorities, taking planning decisions in common, and carrying out" the activities (Derclaye 1987:19). Through this process, farmers learn to achieve their own development.

The Margoas program does not conduct its own projects rather it acts as a provider of support services to the campesinos' projects. When the program's views differ from those of the campesinos, it limits itself to advising farmers on possible solutions to their stated problems, or modifications to the solutions they have put forward. It is then the farmers' themselves who decide whether or not to undertake a particular activity (Derclaye 1987:22). Of course, because, at least in the initial phases, the resources available to the campesinos are few, they depend on the program to approve their initiatives in order to be able to carry them out, and in this sense, final decisions are taken jointly. Because of its position as resource provider, there is an inherent danger that Margoas might attempt to direct the activities of campesinos. Here, Margoas needs to proceed cautiously and allow the campesino organizations as much latitude and autonomy as possible in order to live up to its philosophy of allowing campesinos to practice their own development.

Because campesinos are in control from the beginning, the Margoas program, unlike other programs, does not need to preoccupy itself with the issue of gradual transfer of project control to the campesinos. Thus, as the program evolves, it is not the decision-making process that evolves, but the scope and complexity of the proposals presented and assumed by the farmers' organizations (Derclaye 1987:22-23). As they become consolidated and strengthened institutionally, the farmers' organizations increase their capacity to absorb and manage outside inputs. Also, they should increasingly generate their own resources, so that their need of the ADO is reduced over time.

In summarizing one of the major lessons learned in five years of operation, the Margoas Program directors reiterate the essence of the program itself:

The farmer is logical and his logic is internally consistent. Anyone who is not prepared to accept this logic will have to use pressure, constraints, artificial stimuli and install a supervisory organisation. This means a still-born form of development, because it denies the farmer the expression of his own wishes and keeps him the plaything of strategies which confirm his marginal and oppressed state (Derclaye 1987:19).

CONCLUSIONS

ADOs usually assume that if they learn enough about the peasants' physical and social environments they will be able to devise formulas to improve their lives. Learning about their conditions is a necessary but not sufficient step to help poor farmers in their development efforts. It is very difficult to predict the outcomes of development processes and pre-made "solutions" or those based on "sensitive consultation" often give rise to unexpected problems and difficulties (Cox 1992:62). Besides, "solutions" formulated by planners, even after they have received inputs from prospective beneficiaries, are not necessarily those the beneficiaries would either prefer or commit to, so that,

even with access to reasonably reliable information on rainfall, soil characteristics, crop yields, market prices, and the infrastructural requirements of a proposed program, expert planners have no guarantee that their goals will be acceptable—much less compelling—to the intended beneficiaries. More often, program designers cavalierly assume that beneficiaries will cooperate (Cox 1992:62).

In an effort to achieve this "cooperation" ADOs have, of late, attempted to incorporate local participation into their projects. Unfortunately, because of their neo-paternalistic attitude, most ADOs see the extent of farmers' participation in a project as nothing more than consulting and involving them in its implementation. Attempting to increase community participation under this model is an expensive undertaking since it requires, somewhat ironically, more involvement from the project staff. Cernea points out that community involvement "requires more staff time for the diagnosis phase than conventional top-down planning, and costlier logistical means" (1992:58) while Bhatnagar and Williams refer to the "high transaction costs to generate and sustain participatory approaches"

(1992:4). These additional expenses discourage planners from starting or increasing community participation. On the other hand, if participation is implemented as a development process rather than as one more element or input in the ADOs' projects, it implies no additional expenses (Derclaye 1987:14). On the contrary, development programs that incorporate farmers as partners in development can expect to have lower expenses because the farmers are more inclined to lend their resources and because no ADO efforts are spent in trying to determine the farmers' needs and desires or in trying to motivate them to "participate."

ADOs' concern with participation can be traced to their preoccupation with achieving "adoption" of their technologies. In their obsession with trying to change the behavior and/or beliefs of participants so as to enhance acceptance of their projects, ADOs waste much money and effort they could better use in providing important services to farmers. For example, it is estimated that it is much more expensive (up to fifteen times as much per beneficiary) to attempt to change the behavior of beneficiaries than to provide them with information or educational material (Perrett 1982:33). But, even if beneficiaries are persuaded into cooperating with project planners, the consequences of outside projects most likely will not work in their favor if these projects attempt to provide short term "fixes" instead of long term answers.

The type of community participation practiced by ADOs is, of course, better than no participation, but it still has far to go toward addressing the problems of the rural poor. Community participation in ADOs' projects is generally too limited, but even if it were more extensive, it would still entail campesinos "participating" in somebody else's projects. It would still leave the poor in basically the same situation, perhaps with a few more technical skills, but as unable to cope with the stifling forces in their life as before. While this model of partici-

pation may provide short term results, it is counterproductive in the long run. ADOs should, instead, support farmers in their efforts to conceive, select, design and plan the projects they feel they need the most.

One of the major recognitions derived from a five year study of two decades of development assistance from ODCs to African countries (Lele and Jain 1992) is that agricultural economic growth can best be achieved by concentrating on long-term strategies that support small-holder agriculture. Further, most successful efforts towards the betterment of small farmers have supported the development of "sustainable human, institutional, and technical capacity at the local level" (Lele and Jain 1992:581). Still, most donors during the past two decades favored short-term solutions to alleviate what they perceived as "visible shortages of physical and social capital" (Lele and Jain 1992:581).

In a clear example of the constraints true development faces, Stonich concludes that the main single reason for poverty in Honduras is the lack of access to sufficient productive land (1992:395). Derclaye, speaking for the Margoas program, calls the issue of insufficient land "'the' priority question" (1987:49). Therefore, programs that aim to alleviate rural poverty can only be effective if accompanied by greater access to land for all campesinos and increased off-farm employment opportunities for the landless. Moreover, the "considerable anti-peasant biases in institutions, production, and marketing" need to be eliminated (Stonich 1992:395).

To summarize, the focus of ADOs on providing projects that attempt to transfer technology by modifying attitudes and behavior even while using community participation has proven quite ineffective in addressing the needs of the rural poor. This failure stems from two major characteristics of the current ADO approach. First, it is based on a form of neo-paternalism that gives campesinos the role of supporting actors while project planners assume that of

protagonists which, as seen throughout this paper, generally has negative consequences. Also, it concentrates on developing technical and physical resources instead of human and institutional ones. Thus, the results do not lend themselves to long term sustainability as ADOs seem to be content with short term “success stories.” These types of projects could have some justification if they were able to influence some of the larger factors that affect campesinos, but this is where they actually fail the most.

Yudelman, former director of the Rural and Agricultural Development Program of the World Bank concedes that, based on the Bank’s experience, conventional projects rarely influence changes in national policy because “even large projects represent limited interventions in a national setting” (1985:24). This is one of the main reasons for the inadequacy of technological projects in making significant advances towards alleviating poverty—they are simply not useful in affecting changes in policies that hurt the poor and thus they must act within a context of economic policies that counteract their relative advantages. As a result, campesinos gain virtually nothing from projects, very little personal development, and no improvement in the larger issues that affect them.

As currently designed and implemented, projects tend to actually undermine the self-reliance of campesinos as they address only some of the symptoms of poverty and powerlessness but not the causes. Symptoms might need to be treated first, but as they work on enabling campesinos to address smaller problems, ADOs should also help them gain the ability to address larger ones. Poor farmers need to be able to take an active thinking role in solving their own problems. They can start by having the opportunity to design their own projects. As they refine their social, political, and economic skills, that is, as they mature as a social group, they need to advance into making larger demands on their society.

In order to have a real chance to come out of poverty and powerlessness, campesinos need to be “able to negotiate fairly their needs” (Annis 1992:15) in relation to those of other sectors of society who strive to control land and other natural resources. Even though they are the largest group in the Honduran society, they have the least negotiating power because of their poverty, and because up to now they have not used their real source of power—their numbers and cohesion—to its full potential. ADOs can play a significant role in this liberating process by abandoning their neo-paternalistic, project-based, technology transfer model and adopting one of cooperation and negotiation with rural farmers in a common search for solutions.

On the issue of independence and self-reliance, two comments sum up the main points of this paper:

Elvia Alvarado, Honduran peasant leader:

We Hondurans are capable of doing anything, if we have the education. But instead of teaching Hondurans, the government brings in these foreign experts with their huge salaries. And we continue to be idiots. We don't know how to administer our wealth, so people from other countries have to come to do it for us (1987:104).

A rural Indian:

We need outside help for analysis and understanding of our situation and experience, but not for telling us what we should do. An outsider who comes with ready-made solutions and advice is worse than useless. He must first understand from us what our questions are, and help us articulate the questions better, and then help us find solutions. Outsiders also have to change. He alone is friend who helps us to think about our problems on our own (Roy 1987:164).

Proponents of the present approach in rural development might argue that, to ensure “success,” more information about the intended beneficiaries is needed before embarking on a project, more beneficiary input is needed while designing

the project, and more community participation is needed while implementing the project. This paper has attempted to dispute this notion and, while acknowledging that these recommendations may be a good start, the author contends that they do not go far enough in the pursuit of an improved quality of life for the rural poor. Not until ADO directors be willing to let go of their decision making power and their control over beneficiaries so as to allow them to take matters into their own hands, will the rural poor truly be on their way to emancipation.

APPENDIX: THE DEVELOPMENT RAP

Excuse me, friends, I must catch my jet.
I'm off to join the Development Set.
My bags are packed, I have my shots,
Travellers' checks and pills for the trots.

With passport, visas and advanced degrees,
I'll get those people off their knees.
I know the models, the acronyms, the average yield;
Now all it will take is time in the field.

"Banana Republic"s where I bought my clothes;
Got to make sure the image shows.
These days we do without the aides and lackeys,
As long as we're decked in the Right cut of khakis.

Development people are bright and noble;
Our thoughts are deep, our vision global.
We circulate only with the better classes,
Even though our thoughts are always with the masses.

In Sheraton Inns in scattered nations
We damn those multi-national corporations.
Injustice seems easy to protest
In such seething hotbeds of social rest.

Political systems are out of bounds;
My professor said: "Keep your eyes on the ground.
'Oppression,' 'exploitation' are words not uttered.
You've got to remember where your bread is buttered!"

We talk malnutrition over steak
And plan hunger studies on coffee break.
Whether Asian flood or African drought,
We face any challenge with an open mouth.

We bring in consultants whose circumlocution
Creates a problem for every solution;
Thus making sure we keep on eating
By showing the need for another lunch meeting.

The language of the Development Set
Stretches the English alphabet;
There are obfuscations like "epigenetic,"
"Micro," "macro" and "logarithmic."

It pleases us to be so esoteric;
Intellectually it's atmospheric
The peasants can't understand our babble,
But we're "state-of-the-art" when it comes to Scoble.

In the rural zone there was basic subsistence,
Adoption strategies, and technical assistance.
Then with "integrated" and "participation,"
We thought there'd be enough to feed the whole nation.

When all those catchwords didn't work out
Our proposals began to lose their clout
Grantsmanship is war, yes siree!
Our wordsmiths came up with "FSR-Essa."

When the talk gets deep and you're feeling dumb
You can keep your shame to a minimum.
To show that you, too, are intelligent
Smugly ask, "Is this development?"

Or say, "That's fine in practice, but don't you see:
It doesn't fit with the thee-o-rse."
To the man on the street incomprehensible,
In development-speak that's sensible.

Development homes are very chic,
Full of carvings, curios, and draped batik.
Eye-level photographs subtly assure
Your host is at home with the great and the poor.

There's a Volvo in the driveway and art on the wall
But don't ever ask who pays for it all.
If Congress gets wise to the development racket
We'll need to declare in a lower tax bracket.

Liberals wring their hands at Communists.
The rednecks think that bullets work best.
We keep telling them development's the answer,
To best confront the Marxist cancer.

If you get depressed thinking all is lost,
Thank your stars for "overhead costs."
It builds our buildings and pays our wages,
And helps us publish those reams of pages.

The starving masses are kept at bay,
You and I will die and rot some day.
For now keep in mind as you sip your beer
Most of that foreign aid ends up here.

Enough of these verses--on with the mission!
Our task is as broad as the human condition
Just pray that the biblical verse is true:
"The poor ye shall always have with you"

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