

The Tyranny of Subsistence

NGO Lessons Learned in Rural Guatemala

By Earl and Suzanne de Berge

June 2012

Seeds for a Future

Semillas Para el Futuro

Fighting poverty. Fostering independence.

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Introduction

Can a tiny community in a country of 13 million people - 5% who live in poverty - come together, work as one and become a thriving, self-sufficient entity?

The answer is yes, but not without our help.

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This article is divided into seven sections and deals with some of the things we have learned while founding and then running a small community development NGO in Guatemala. The observations presented herein are drawn from six years of work in an indigenous Guatemalan village of about 1,500 families called Chocolá.

Our experiences may not apply to other rural communities. However, from our conferences and discussions with other NGOs and our interviews and work within other communities, we believe our experiences are more common than they are unique.

In addition, large NGOs may have all the experience and tools they need to deal with some of these issues, but NGOs with modest budgets and small staffs might find these lessons of value.

Part One

What are we doing and how we got started.

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The end of the Guatemalan Civil War resulted in a flood of high minded NGO programs spreading across the country in the hope of helping desperately poor people gain everything from their human rights, to better health care, food and nutrition, education, protection of orphans, family planning and training in governance.

Most deserve to be applauded, but because government and many NGOs find it quicker and less costly to pass out money, services and equipment for “immediate impact” on critical issues such as clean water systems, vaccinations and food distribution, there has been a lack of emphasis on human resource training in such matters as community visioning, leadership training, democracy, conflict resolution and governance. The absence of such training may leave communities fighting over the goods and services, rather than learning how to work together toward critical common goals. Many communities came to look to government and NGOs for charity rather than for the human resource development they need gain control of their futures.

Seeds for a Future (Seeds) is an Arizona based 501.c.3 with an on-the-ground partner organization of the same name in Guatemala. Founded in 2007 we work in a rural community on the Pacific Piedmont deploying four integrated programs (a) agro-forestry reform, (b) food security and nutrition, (c) a learning center for children and adults and (d) training in leadership, democracy, management and conflict resolution.

Most rural farm communities in Guatemala are stagnating in environments of severe unemployment, malnutrition, poor education systems and lack of capital. Our long term goal is to help the community develop leadership skills, create enterprises that create jobs and to gain the self-confidence needed to identify and pursue a

vision for itself that is inclusive of men, women and young adults. Our dream is for Chocolá to become an education center where people from the region can come to learn what the people of Chocolá have accomplished for themselves and take those lessons that fit, back their own communities.

The first thing that we did prior to initiating any work in Chocolá was, with the help of Guatemala visionary Derek Steele, to organize a body of Guatemala business, academic and community program professionals to advise us. We would recommend a similar course of action to any out-of-country NGO with limited experience on the ground in the country they wish to serve.

We were wisely advised by anthropologist Doctor Alberto Rivera to be aware that Chocolá was not a “community”. That it was at odds with itself and knew neither how to identify common goals nor how to organize to achieve them. Dr. Rivera was absolutely correct and to the great credit of the Seeds Board an initial leadership training program was brought to the community within six months and produced positive impacts as well as identifying other issues to be addressed in the future.

Businessman Alfredo Torriello warned us not to try and develop community-wide programs but rather to identify smaller communities of interest within Chocolá which could work together toward goal in which they can experience success in the short term and which could demonstrate the power and satisfaction of working together toward a common goal. This is very wise advice which we follow to this day.

We were also advised by the learned Derek Steele, head of the Antigua think tank Centro de Ideas, to avoid programs built on simply giving the community money and to instead support training

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that helps build sustainability and capacity based on sound feasibility analysis of human resource factors. This resulted in the adoption of four guiding principals:

- We would provide information and technical assistance to help the community identify opportunities and to plan.
- We would consider funding community requests for assistance on specific projects providing the requests come through established groups, demonstrate sustainability and a willingness and capability to provide part of the needed resources.
- We would help connect the community to programs of public and private organizations that may be of value.
- We would make sure that community participants understand that once their training was completed, they would be responsible to continuing – and should prepare for that reality.

We still work under these principles and we would recommend that if your NGO plans to initiate work in a community, you consider holding advance meetings with experienced local professionals in your field of endeavor to vision and discipline your work within a culturally relevant framework.

So, in 2007 we began with leadership training programs. The response of the community was excellent: People were positive, talking together, making plans and shaking hands and working together ... some said for the first time in years. From this we assumed the lessons would “stick to the wall” so we could move to another stage of project work and longer distance visioning.

This conclusion was profoundly wrong.

Simultaneously, two of our Guatemala partners (the Cultural Project at El Sitio and the economic development program of Funda Sistemas) were pursuing community development programs in other rural parts of the country and learning very important lessons. . . three of which applied to our own work:

First, while technical training is important, it is only half of what is needed during early project phases. Equally important is human resource development -- helping people gain self-confidence and the organizational and leadership skills needed to put their new skills to work in a sustainable way and to teach people democratic skills to reach consensus and resolve conflicts.

Second, and speaking generally, we learned that rural people are easily discouraged when either of two things happen ... the training is intermittent or if they cannot experience some short term success that encourages them to press on. When either happens, participants return to their farms and do what experience has taught them will feed their families.

This led to the third lesson we call “accompaniment” -- that both the technical and human resource training must be consistent, frequent and sustained, because if it is not, the second “lesson” kicks in.

Part Two

Basics for When You Start.

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It might come as a surprise to learn that more than a few NGOs set up and start doing business here without first registering with the government or learning about labor law practices, tax laws and other regulations that need to be followed. Some even head down the trail without obtaining non-profit status in the U.S.

Neither are good ideas for the obvious reason that it breaks the law, but as well, because it creates some potential problems you definitely want to avoid: suddenly discovering that you own a month's wages to all your employees above their basic salary; discovering that you have not paid taxes required of you even though you think of yourselves as a non-profit; finding you have violated some seemingly trivial regulation that will permit a by-the-book bureaucrat to shut you down or discovering that grant applications you have made will be rejected because you are not registered in the host country; ... and so on.

We recommend you consult the Guatemala NGO Network in Antigua for guidance and attorney/accountant referrals. They can be reached via e-mail at laguanet@gmail.com and their web site www.guatemala-ongs.net. Any other country you are working in will have similar requirements, so get started with a clear understanding of what the host country expects and requires of you.

Fund raising is difficult in Guatemala so we recommend you do not expect local foundations, businesses or philanthropists to be of much help. They support a great many causes, but foreign NGOs, and especially small start-ups, are not to be high on their list of priorities.

In addition, fund raising in countries like Guatemala is difficult because tax laws here do not offer donors tax write-offs for their generosity. Most successful local fund raising is

based on personal connections which take years to develop.

Also, do not assume that you will find it easy to raise money in the U.S. for your humanitarian project. Have your money lined up for at least three or four years and start doing more fund raising the minute you start. People will ask you – “Why should I donate to help Guatemala when there are so many problems here at home?” It's a fair question.

If you are not a registered US based 501.c.3, consider going through the process to get that designation. It will significantly improve your chances of attracting donors – small or large. But in addition, if you are going after grants from foundations in the US or abroad or are seeking funds from intergovernmental funding agencies or bi-lateral corporations, you will in almost all cases, need to be an established 501.c.3 before you are even eligible to seek a grant from them. So the sooner you become a 501.c.3 – the better.

You should also be aware that you will need to make decisions as to whether your employees should be hired as “employees” or “contract workers” because labor and tax laws for the two are different. Do not assume that labor or corporate laws of the U.S. have any bearing on how the country you are working in has organized its own laws. Make sure you know what minimum wage laws provide.

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Be prepared to endure difficulties in establishing a bank account. The process can be daunting ... even inexplicable. You will need an experienced accountant or attorney to lead you through the process but getting the account can greatly expedite your ability to transfer funds, receive donations and make payroll.

Consult a trusted and experienced person on which local banks are considered most stable and try to choose one that has corresponding relationships with the US Bank where you will have your 501.c.3 funds. Get this taken care of just as soon as you can and depending upon the type of account, it may several months for the paper work to be completed.

Part Three

The Tyranny of Subsistence Economics and Traditional Roles.

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The years following the genocidal civil war in Guatemala left people in rural indigenous villages and towns (more than ½ of the nation's population) in economic, political, social and attitudinal environments hallmarked by deepening poverty, loss of land, factionalism, pessimism, and systematic exclusion of poor people, women and young people from decision-making and leadership roles.

It also left entire communities with deep doubts about their ability for self-improvement yet with a thirst for technical, managerial and leadership training.

It is important to respect the fact that the economic environment of poor rural people is such that they simply cannot sustain committing time to educational or developmental activities that interfere with their basic economic survival strategies. This means that things will happen at a slower pace. And secondly it means that NGO Boards need to appreciate that the time participants give to programs is a real investment and that to help them sustain such an investment, the NGO may need to include some compensation for participants who are working hard and showing leadership skills. Yet it must be done in a way that is not viewed as a "hand out". Compensation, even if modest, must be earned, or it is not respected. And be sensitive to the reality that as much as participants may thirst for training to improve their skills, most will get no direct benefit until the programs begin to generate positive outcomes that in some cases may not materialize until after months of training and learning to work together.

Thus, a core question that needs an answer is: how long can participants sustain volunteer contributions of their time and labor before the stress is unbearable ...e.g., unsustainable and they have to drop out?

What can the NGO do to ease the transition.?Their hearts and minds may be configured for success, but the crushing realities of keeping food on the table will always trump their ability to invest time and energy in something new. This is particularly true if an economic development program may take considerable time to generate any return on their investment.

For example, a food security and nutrition program based on teaching women to grow nutritious vegetables in a home garden produces quick results and encouragement to participants that they can (a) master new skills and (b) put more food on their tables and (c) possibly generate surpluses that can be sold to supplement the family income. In contrast, an agricultural reform program that takes years for fruit producing trees to mature will need transition strategies to make sure the family does not starve while waiting for prosperity. Consequently, you may be well advised to emphasize programs during your start up activities that can show short term benefits to the participants.

In our experience, when farmers, homemakers or their young adult children elect to dedicate part of their time that would otherwise be spent in gainful employment or work dedicated to a family needs or their farm, the sponsoring NGO should hold candid discussions with participants about what will work for them and should be willing to consider cash or in-kind compensation methods because the time participants devote to training is time that may result in lower family income and worse nutrition for children or themselves.

In the case of our agro-forestry program, in return for attending the classes and volunteering in the work of the nursery, we made the tree seedlings available to them for 1/8th the market retail value. Thus

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participants could both afford the plants and have respect for what they earned and learned.

There are also cultural “barriers” (try to call these opportunities) to consider. Men, women and young adults live within age and gender roles that are deeply ingrained and which tend to block women and youth from leadership and even participation in some kinds of work. Nonetheless, we recommend persistent but polite pressure from the NGO, for inclusion of women and youth in all programs.

This is particularly important today because television programming has penetrated many households and with it, women and youth see different roles for themselves and are interested in exploring those roles. When given an opportunity to show what they can do, Chocolá women have led the way in responding to new ideas and have in no small degree, pulled men along with them.

Before you start, it is wise to get to know the community, identify potential leaders among the men, women and young adults and to adjust your cultural orientation to see things through their eyes. Discussions and visioning sessions in which motivated community members are afforded opportunities to put their vision on the table are critical to long term buy-in. And above all, be sensitive to the reality that people with limited education and experience in long term planning may be slow to engage in the discussion. Take your time. Draw people on the exterior of the circle into your discussions. It is not that they do not have ideas, but rather, that they need to feel “safe” in putting their ideas on the table. Small, intimate round table discussion among peers using a “talking stone” can lead to a lot of insight and consensus building.

We have found that participants expect to contribute both time and money for the training and other

benefits they receive because it establishes two things in their minds (a) that they have participated in a fair exchange and (b) because it gives them non-personal grounds to jettison “do nothing” participants (including relatives or neighbors). In most cases, their cash contribution should be modest (even token). Their contribution in volunteer hours is significant and means a lot to them, so treat volunteerism as being as valuable as cash -because it is. Both their volunteer time and cash gives participants a sense of ownership and pride.

Part Four

The Importance of Accompaniment and Patience.

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In Part One we mentioned the sad reality that in many rural Guatemala indigenous communities, there exists a certain level of defeatism, low self-esteem and self-doubt about being able to lift one's self out of poverty. As one fellow put it early in our work in Chocolá "I doubt we will ever get ahead – everything is stacked against us."

Such pessimism is often coupled with a dogged belief that because old methods served their fathers, it may be best to stick with the old methods ... even if sticking with them is unlikely to improve their skill sets or financial situation.

At the same time, there is a powerful thirst to learn things that can help them improve their incomes and care for their families. But the general impact of their pessimism and low esteem can produce a reticence to engage, and even when once engaged, a quickness to assume that if the training program falters in its schedule or if there is some other setback, they would be better off returning to what they know how to do. Why should they spin their wheels with instructors who may not give a hoot about them to begin with? Remember, poor rural folks work like the devil just to stay even, so it is a huge insult to waste their time.

This reticence traces, we believe, in large measure to 500 years of working people being treated as if they are indentured servants -- stupid, uneducable, untrustworthy and perhaps even unworthy. To this day, most rural men receive only a five or six grades of education (even less for women) and the education they receive is of poor quality and devoid of training in problem solving or critical thinking.

The "patron system" has pretty much turned workers into order-takers who are discouraged from

making on-the-job decisions by themselves. Fear of punishment or loss of job for making a 'wrong' decision is widespread. Learning from errors is not encouraged.

More recently, the low self-esteem traces to the genocidal war that quite literally made indigenous people targets of the military to such a degree that native men stopped wearing their traditional clothing so as not to stand out. On top of this is the wildfire spread of evangelical congregations headed by ministers who discourage native people from speaking their native tongue or of clinging to their Maya culture or religion. Another blow to self-esteem, when your heritage is deemed "evil." And finally, overlaid on all of this is a history of government education and social programs that are administered unfairly, laced with favoritism and corruption or which never materialize after being widely touted.

When an NGO swings into town with its own idea of what the folks need to better their lives, it is too likely to talk rather than listen and in doing so, too often makes promises it cannot fulfill even if its members mean well. And except for their possibly poor Spanish language skills, they may sound just like the government to local people.

The net result of this history is that even though people in rural communities are anxious for training programs that will help them acquire skills they want, they are cautious and equally quick to be discouraged and drop out if trainers show up late or continually re-schedule training sessions. These are sometimes unavoidable problems in Guatemala due to poor roads, undependable bus service to rural areas and some arrogance on the part of teachers. Regardless, residents view such behaviors as proof that they are just being disrespected ... again.

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The Importance of Accompaniment and Patience.

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Consequently we have found it necessary to adopt a zero tolerance policy for full, part-time or special class trainers in all of our programs. The best solution we have found so far is to engage a staff administrator/teacher who is in the community at least three to four days every week and who trains local assistants so that participants always have access to an instructor. This does wonders for building moral and self-confidence in the program participants.

Patience is also an essential element in getting programs started and keeping them going. For extremely poor people, family matters and such simple realities as having to walk two or three miles to get to or from a meeting after a long days work are important considerations. Morning meetings and training sessions generally will be poorly attended by men. In the rainy season, no meetings will be attended by men during the morning and early afternoon hours because that is the only time one can work in one's fields without being exposed to heavy afternoon rains. Youth group meetings have to be scheduled around school hours and for women, afternoon meetings may generally be best.

It is wise to chat with people at length about what hours and days work best for them and as much as possible, to let them decide the schedule. You must learn the rhythm of a community and fit your schedule to it.

Part Five

Crabs in a Bucket - Leadership Training.

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There is an unpleasant and demeaning characterization of poor people in rural areas of Guatemala which is thrown against them as an explanation as to why they will always be poor. It is known as “crabs in the bucket”. The image is of a bucket filled with crabs in which any crab with the initiative to try and climb out of the bucket will be pulled back in by those who resent its initiative.

It basically characterizes rural people as unable to get ahead because of petty jealousies and ignorance about the values of working together and has a general cruel undertone that they are too stupid to figure it all out. While there is some truth in the observation that all small towns suffer from petty politics and jealousies, a more honest characterization would include fat crabs which long ago escaped the bucket and now stand on the bucket lip ready to step on the heads of crabs still trying to get ahead.

In reality, rural people are “escaping” the community all the time by migrating to the cities or to other areas where unemployment is lower and wages higher. Unfortunately, this is also a kind of brain drain because it is often the smartest and most motivated who leave a community that desperately needs their leadership, motivation and fresh thinking.

But there is also plenty of evidence that initiative and training are rewarded. We have learned that people who can survive extreme poverty have developed many skills and are often natural entrepreneurs who lack only money and higher skill sets to get ahead. Just in the few years we have been providing skills and leadership training, new women and family retail businesses have been established, farmers have planted 10,000 fruit and timber trees to shift away from mono-culture coffee, other farmers

are learning and applying added-value post-harvest techniques to lift their income and a plant nursery for native plants has been formed that will bring jobs and new income to the community.

A major lesson we have learned is that leadership, democracy, conflict resolution and basic business skills training are as important, if not more so, than job skills and technical training. Whatever an NGO's project may be, and whatever sub-group of the community they wish to work with, the training should include these leadership elements as well. Changes in attitude and behavior will not come overnight and you must be patient because things will really get rolling when the people you are helping come to believe they can succeed by working together and that they need you less and less.

We experienced this one afternoon several years ago when a group of 30 community leaders and elders (all men) invited us to receive their thanks for “believing in them” and for encouraging them to believe in themselves. We accepted their thanks gracefully but noted that they still had a ways to go. “As you can see”, our President pointed out, “there are no women or young people here today and although I am not young, you will notice I am a woman and head of our organization.” Today, women dominate two of the three community boards where training is being provided.

Our advice is to ignore characterizations of villagers as unable and too petty to advance but to take seriously the potentially destructive impact of small town jealousies and gossip. Leadership training can go a long way to help arm a community with better tools to manage rumors and gossip and there are community organizers who can provide classes on such issues with great positive effect.

Part Five, continued

Crabs in a Bucket - Leadership Training.

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It is almost always a mistake to ignore untrue gossip about your organization, employees or participants. We have found it best to politely but directly and publically get to the bottom of the rumor.

An example we experienced occurred shortly after our then new head agronomist was given quarters in an old German building and discovered that the building was overrun with pigeons and their waste. He decided to capture them by saturating corn with grain alcohol so that when the birds feed on the grain they became drunk and easier to catch. Some villagers saw the empty alcohol bottles in his trash and concluded he was a drunkard – not a wise thing to be in a community with 28 evangelical ministers who preach against alcohol every day. We immediately confronted the rumor, explained reality and everyone got a good laugh and settled down. Had we not done so, he could have been forced out of town.

Part Six

The Catalytic Power of Women.

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When we first began work in Chocolá, our consulting anthropologist and community resident insisted we work principally with the elders of the community to win their support and to gain an understanding of their vision for the community. But as was mentioned in our first blog in this series, the majority of the “elders” (all men) are frozen in place by fear and resist change that does not conform to their world view or their traditional role as decision-makers. Old rivalries and scores to settle come with them in all of their thinking.

What is more, elders are often the victims of “group think” that leads them, at the first bump in the road, to withdraw their support and encourage others to do the same. Younger men in the group may see a different vision, but cultural barriers will and did prevent them from challenging the reticence of the senior elders. Result: nothing happens and a restart becomes necessary. Lesson learned: Do not start only with the community elders – simultaneously open secondary and even tertiary contacts with younger groups, women’s groups and other community improvement groups as may exist.

We also learned in this process that it is pointless to advocate “community” consensus on “community goals” because the village was really just a collection of neighborhood and family clans who tend to put clan above community and the “elders” really only govern themselves.

This called for refocusing from who to work with to what to work on. We concluded that we needed generic programs that transcended elder or neighborhood issues and which could be the template in which people could experience the values of learning, working together and earning a few extra Quetzales.

The most successful approach proved to be one in which women could take the lead. It involved gardening ... a traditional role for women but also one in which younger members of the household could participate ... and be successful. And because women also play a traditional role in vending vegetables around the neighborhood or in the small village market, it also cracked open a door for them to create small retail vegetables businesses. To make a long endeavor into a short story, suffice it to say that the women gravitated strongly to the program, quickly sorted out leadership issues and made a success of it – putting more food for the table, spending less money in the market for food, selling some of their surplus and earning for themselves a stronger economic role in the family.

Their successes were not lost on younger adults or on the male elders who found themselves in the unaccustomed position of not being able to withhold their support from the new economic contributions of their wives and daughters.

So what did we learn and how did we apply that learning? The first is that women, for whatever reason are powerfully motivated to become bigger players in the family economic unit and are less afraid than are men, of experimenting. Second, younger adults are similarly motivated but need an institutional shell within which to work. Youth groups become a vehicle for them to select their areas of work and make a statement.

These experiences also taught us that it is important to abandon the notion that we were engaged in a “community” improvement project. Trying to work with an entire community is like trying to herd suspicious wild horses. We needed a smaller circle of people to work with. What proved more efficacious

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for the purpose of helping the “community” come to appreciate the power of visioning and working together, is to identify smaller groups that are motivated and show potential to (a) be inclusive and (b) work together in specific programs.

In our case these were a farmers cooperative focused on reforming planting and harvesting techniques; a woman’s group interested in learning to raise vegetables for their families; a parent group interested in improving their children’s readiness for school and lastly, those interested in learning leadership and governance skills. These smaller efforts provided a platform in which successes, no matter how modest, could be achieved early and become visible. More importantly, the program structures were not conditioned by approval of the male elders ... the most conservative elements of the community.

A most interesting outcome, however, is that as male elders watched women have success in their work, heads began to turn and we are now seeing more gender and age inclusiveness in their agro-forestry endeavors.

Part Seven

If Your Goal is to leave a “Sustainable” Entity Behind

“Our goal is to provide the community with a “sustainable” program.”.

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This may be the most overused and least accurate phrase we hear NGOs utter in Guatemala. There are examples all over Guatemala of programs that simply sputtered and died after the NGO left town to do some other good work somewhere else, self satisfied that they had fulfilled their mission. And there are empty medical clinics, non-functioning water works, empty private schools, farmers raising tons of luscious strawberries but with no means to get them to market, and food /nutrition programs for which little is known about whether the training provided is continued after the NGO leaves or even if it had an lasting impact on the participants. Maybe they did some good while they were working with a community, but when they left, the communities or groups they helped were unable to “sustain” the program because they were not taught how to sustain it.

Before raising the hopes of any community, one of the first things an NGO should ask themselves is: After we leave, what will remain in the community and is it something they want and can sustain?”

If the NGO’s work is project oriented (for example, assembling and installing 25 new clean wood burning stoves in the homes of poor people and nothing more) then the answer is simple ... “we paid for and installed 25 new stoves for needy families.” But if the NGO goal is to create a sustainable new stove program that can be run by local people after the NGO has left, create jobs and grow, the NGO will need to include training and teachers that can go beyond building stoves ... such things as marketing, work force and business management, accounting, banking, securing lines of credit, contracts, meeting government regulations, and so on. This is not so daunting as it sounds for there are many excellent university based programs in Guatemala where business professors consult on the side or have practicum programs where advanced degree

students are required to do projects in communities that need to learn their skills.

In our experience, Guatemalans at all levels are entrepreneurial and will respond to business and management training notwithstanding their limited educational backgrounds. We define sustainability as economic and human development programs which when once established can continue financially and managerially without the on-going infusion of outside money. (Such a definition does not include programs whose purposes are more humanitarian in nature such as health care, general education, welfare and community security. Those programs always need subsidy and if they do not, it may be fair to ask whether they serve the poor.)

It matters not if the ultimate business is to be privately owned by graduates of the training program or by the community or a cooperative of community members. What matters is that the business can continue to operate with a positive cash flow that enables it to grow, provide jobs and sell ethical products or services. For example, in one aspect of the work we are doing, people are being trained how to manage the growing side of a nursery that will produce seedlings of all vegetables needed for the food security and nutrition program. But at the same time, if they do not establish the nursery as a successful business, it will fail within a few months of when the NGO stops providing money.

Consequently, our training includes business training on everything from business planning and marketing, to bookkeeping, HR management, contracts and selling. We think it is both unethical and unfair to train people on the technical side without also giving them the tools to keep the operation going. Why train people to fail?

Our Partners

Much of our success thus far has been due to strong partnerships with many community leaders and organizations:

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Amigos de Chocolá: Supports our community with funds for library and other social programs, including scholarships.

Arkay Foundation (arkayfoundation.org): This foundation provides non-earmarked funds to support Seeds/Semillas' efforts in Chocolá. Board member Karen Kahn is a Director of the Foundation.

Avnet, Inc. (avnet.com): Headquartered in Phoenix, AZ, Avnet is an international technology-distribution company. Beginning in 2011, Avnet has provided multiple grants in support of Seeds/Semillas' education programs.

Behavior Research Center, Inc (brc-research.com): The Center is owned by the present leaders of Seeds/Semillas and has underwritten all basic administrative, communications and meeting costs of the organization. It also underwrites the professional time of two of its executives in support of the program, totaling roughly 8 man-months a year between the two executives.

East-West Seeds (eastwestseed.com): Headquartered in Thailand, East-West Seeds specializes in researching, developing and introducing high-yield vegetable varieties that grow well in tropical climates. They have partnered with Seeds/Semillas to provide seeds and technical support to the family gardening program.

Friends of the Phoenix Library: With the help of Friends of the Phoenix Library, Seeds/Semillas has added 2,500 library-quality Spanish-language books to the CLC library on subjects primarily for children and women.

FundaSistemas (fundasistemas.org): Dedicated to systemic economic development programs in rural Guatemala, including programs targeted at increasing Guatemala's cacao crop, FundaSistemas has provided two years of on-site counseling and training pertaining

to cacao and reforestation to our cacao grower group. As the cacao farmers' plantations in Chocolá move into the production stages, it will assist in design and construction of a processing plant, and getting product to market.

FUNSEPA (Fundacion Sergio Paiz Andrade): A private family foundation in Guatemala supporting and providing education and technology for Guatemala's youth. Through its connection with Riecken Community Libraries Foundation, Seeds/Semillas qualifies to participate in FUNSEPA's computer-based digital education plan.

Guatemala Ministry of Culture: The Ministry supports cultural development and has provided Seeds/Semillas with technical and in-kind support and directed the development of a Master Plan for Historic Preservation in Chocolá.

International Capital Partners: A real estate investment firm formerly headquartered in Phoenix, which has provided significant non-earmarked funds in support of the program.

Let's Be Ready (letsbeready.org): Let's Be Ready has more than 20 pre-schools in rural communities in Guatemala. We engage in a reciprocal program with this NGO in which we provide training to parents and teachers on vegetable production and have provided building construction materials for their school in the Chocolá area.

Marketing with Imagination (marketingwithimagination.com): This strategic marketing and brand development firm and their associates, Paul Howell Design and The Lucid Agency support Seeds with the development of print and web communication planning and materials.

Namaste Direct: An NGO that provides micro-financing and business training to women.

Pilones de Antigua (pilones.com): The largest producer of vegetable and tree seedlings in Guatemala, Pilones has provided important in-kind contributions including training on plant germination, plants and tree stock for both the reforestation and vegetable programs and green house construction materials.

Our Partners

Continued:

Seeds for a Future Semillas Para el Futuro

Rain Forest Alliance (rainforest-alliance.org): The Rainforest Alliance has helped to identify a palette of native trees that grow well in the region which can replace non-native trees as shade for coffee and offer farmers new sources of income through the production and sale of fruit, nuts and lumber.

Riecken Community Library Foundation (riecken.org): We collaborate with Riecken Community Libraries to increase the capacity of our Community Learning Center. It provides information and organizational training to the Library Committee and Director, and guides the development and implementation of reading and learning programs.

Riester Foundation (riesterfoundation.com): A private US foundation interested in forest canopies and migration pathways for tropical birds. Their grants support the Cacao and Reforestation initiatives.

Wuqu' Kawoq: Wuqu' Kawoq is a health NGO focusing on educating local populations on maternal and child health care, environmental conditions which influence health, and family issues such as health, and family issues such as health maintenance, nutrition, diabetes & substance abuse. Wuqu' Kawoq supports our health programs.

The Hershey Company (thehersheycompany.com) and Mitsubishi Exportadora: The Hershey Company and Mitsubishi Exportadora in Guatemala, have encouraged individual employees to provide important technical services, principally scientific in nature, in the form of chemical, food safety and flavor analysis of cacao samples from Chocolá to ascertain their commercial value, to ensure that the farmers are producing a safe and marketable product, as well as helping Seeds/Semillas and Chocolá establish exportation contacts which will serve upcoming product marketing.

Education Partners: University of San Carlos, the University del Valle and the Centro Regional de Capacitacion (CERCAP): We have partnered with these universities and organizations to provide both workshop teachers and practicum graduate students to teach, coach and mentor in our democracy training programs.

Our Board

Our board is made up of a number of distinguished leaders and businesspeople. We can't thank them enough for their contributions.

Seeds for a Future Semillas Para el Futuro

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