



Canadian Council for  
International Co-operation

**INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION AWARD**

**PROFILING DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE:  
INNOVATION IN CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL NGOs**

**CoDevelopment Canada:  
An Experience  
of Partnership**



**CoDevelopment Canada**

# Profiling Development Practice: Innovation in Canadian International NGOs

## INTRODUCTION

by Gauri Sreenivasan

**T**he Initiative profiled in this publication is the recipient of the 1996 CCIC International Cooperation Award. The Award was created to support and promote learning about strategies for sustainable human development, and to profile innovation and excellence in the work of the Canadian voluntary sector to that end.

### THE ROLES OF VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS AS DEVELOPMENT ACTORS<sup>1</sup>

In any country, international voluntary organizations<sup>2</sup> are but a sector of the varied field of organizations that make up civil society. But their place in civil society gives them a particular vantage to work on different dimensions of the development process. In the Canadian context, the voluntary sector groups all the non-governmental, non-profit organizations whose primary purpose is to support local development priorities and aspirations, mainly — but not exclusively — in the South. This includes the development arms of the churches, unions, cooperatives and professional associations<sup>3</sup>. The work of voluntary sector in Canada is strongly rooted in a commitment to equity and justice.

These NGOs, as they are often

called, have many forms, from relief organizations, to popular, development organizations, advocacy groups and networks. The roles of NGOs are varied and complex. Some Canadian voluntary organizations undertake initiatives to increase the development effectiveness of Southern governments. NGOs are also involved in — particularly small-scale — private sector development. But the sector has a particular history of partnerships with Southern civil societies. Indeed, Canadian voluntary organizations have worked to strengthen the capacity of marginalized groups such as peasants, refugees, women, youth and the urban poor, to organize and articulate their interests in civil society, supporting important processes of democratization and public participation.

Profound changes in the North and the South have prompted significant evolution within these roles. With the emergence of significant NGO activity in southern countries, many NGOs have shifted from a focus on direct program delivery<sup>4</sup> to working in partnership with Southern organizations to carry out a range of development activities, from health and education, to small-scale and sustainable agriculture, micro-enterprise development, appropriate technology and community development.

While northern NGOs continue to play a role in supporting the development of capacity for program delivery

<sup>1</sup>This section draws on the concepts elaborated in more detail in *Canada's Voluntary Sector in International Development*, CCIC (1995).

<sup>2</sup>The term voluntary sector signifies all non profit charities or social action organizations, and not merely those engaged in international issues.

<sup>3</sup>op. cit. note 4, p.5.

<sup>4</sup>With the exception of humanitarian relief work.

of southern development NGOs, collaboration with southern organizations has focused increasingly on research, policy development and advocacy work at local, national, and multilateral levels.

Canadian NGOs also play important roles in building awareness of and engagement in global issues among the broader public. In particular, NGO programming often seeks to build relationships between citizens north and south — women, workers, youth — relationships that precipitate social and political action; relationships that bring about the kinds of changes in attitudes that are necessary for sustainable human development to take root globally.

Although Canadian NGOs have set themselves a formidable agenda for change, the sector has a significant base of experience and strength on which to draw. Those familiar with different threads of the sector's more-than-30-year history, can speak to the innovation and excellence in Canadian NGO work. The case study described is but one example of this work. We hope that others can draw lessons to apply to their own experience. The NGO sector has a tendency to be humble about its accomplishments, but excellent work is being done and it needs to be celebrated, shared and integrated within and across sectors

#### **RECOGNIZING INNOVATION AND EXCELLENCE**

In developing the CCIC International Cooperation Award, we sought criteria that would identify initiatives that exemplify the best of NGO work and provide useful lessons for other development actors.

**Transformative** — building on the transformational quality of human agency; promoting change that is not

palliative but that addresses the root causes of powerlessness.

**Sustainable** — promoting development that meets people's needs without compromising the opportunity for future generations to meet theirs; that the initiative itself be sustainable and, where possible, contribute to the viability and long term capacity of the NGO and involved partners.

**Participatory in North and South** — propelled by the participation of people, rooted in a reciprocal partnership between northern and southern actors, and reflecting and nurturing support for development action and learning in northern and southern societies.

**Linking Policy and Practice** — reflecting an awareness of the need to support change at a community level, as well as in the meso and macro policy environment within which community development must flourish.

**Learning Oriented** — lessons of success and failure are thought through and applied, informing and changing the initiative and other aspects of the organization and its work.

**Innovative** — demonstrating both creativity and a willingness to take risks, to try new forms or new approaches to serve development goals, while maintaining flexibility to adapt and change to an evolving context.

**Replicable** — adaptable for use by other organizations, either in form or methodology.

Of course, the case study that follows is specific to its contexts and history, but, we hope, offers useful lessons for those interested in the challenges of promoting a viable future for the planet and its peoples.

# CoDevelopment Canada: An Experience of Partnership

by Frances Arbour

## PROJECT SUMMARY

**C**oDevelopment Canada (CoDev) is a small, British Columbia-based NGO with projects in Peru, Bolivia, Cuba and six Central American countries. It was established in 1985 "...to promote sustainable partnerships between Canadian organizations and their counterparts in Latin America." In an effort to overcome the paternalism of traditional north-south development relationships, CoDev has developed a model of partnership in which similar kinds of organizations in the north and south — unions, community groups, professional associations — can learn from each other in ways that support their respective social struggles. In this model, all three players — CoDev and the northern and southern partner organizations — assume responsibility for the development of the relationship, and all three interact directly with one another.

Initially, the participating organizations in the north were teachers federations and unions. Since then, a variety of non-profit, community associations and First Nations organizations have also come on board. In the south, the first partners were teachers federations, particularly the women's secretariats of these organizations. Later, the pool of southern partners expanded to include women's organizations working on health-related issues, and, later still, organizations representing indigenous groups.

Drawing on the experiences of local teachers and solidarity activists, CoDev has facilitated exposure tours and exchanges calculated to deepen awareness among British Columbians about Latin America. In this way, it has sought to build a pool of educators who can help spread the message of solidarity to union locals, schools and communities, and build interest among these organizations in seeking long-term relationships with their counterparts in Latin America.

Through these partnerships, and by supporting the participation and leadership of women, CoDev is working to fortify southern organizations in ways that enable them to have a stronger hand in defining and shaping their society's commitment to basic services and rights for all people. Thus CoDev is helping to strengthen both the civil society actors and the democratic processes that underpin sustainable human development.

While CoDev's constituencies include workers and unions, community organizations and aboriginal groups, the present case study describes the agency's work with northern and southern teachers' federations. The story of CoDev's evolution is itself a story about learning how to forge and nurture enduring partnerships between northern and southern organizations.

## I. INTRODUCTION

*"Guatemalan teachers have been motivated by what British Columbian teachers do in their own context. They have helped us to understand our rights as women teachers within the union. Many women teachers are now participating more actively and, finally, three women have been elected to the national union executive. Over time, the relationship has become deeper — there is more friendship and more solidarity."*

Rosario Bajarona, Women's  
Commission of the Education Workers  
Union of Guatemala

*"With the free trade agreement and other changes in the economy and the workplace, the links we've made between Canada and Latin America are more real. It wasn't just, "Oh these poor people, we need to help them." It was, "These are workers facing struggles similar to ones we face here." These links have really helped Canadian workers understand globalization."*

Rhonda Spence,  
CoDev Board member

During the early 1980s in British Columbia, teachers, trade unionists, social activists, lawyers, doctors and others were looking for ways to express solidarity with their counterparts in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala.

Of the many organizations seeking links with Latin America, the British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF) had developed the strongest institutional connections. The BCTF had three spheres of interest: collective bargaining, professional development and social responsibility. It operated a Status of Women Program and an

International Solidarity Program and had established its own international solidarity fund in 1981. Even before CoDev was founded in 1985, the BCTF was already supporting teachers in Honduras and a national literacy campaign in Nicaragua. It also helped establish the Central American Teachers Federation (FOMCA). In the early 1980s, BCTF's institutional support to the Honduran Elementary Teachers Federation (COLPROSUMAH) saw the besieged union through a critical period of political repression by the military and security forces.

## II. BEGINNINGS

As international political awareness among the BCTF membership grew, the federation decided it wanted to fund projects in Latin America and to develop direct, long-term links with Latin American teachers and their organizations. Other groups involved in the province's solidarity movement also supported the creation of a British Columbia-based NGO that could help construct formal links between unions in specific sectors in British Columbia and similar organizations in Latin America. None of the Canadian NGOs in existence at the time appeared prepared to take on this task. The BCTF had neither the capacity to undertake development programming, nor the requisite knowledge of Latin America. During 1985, discussions between BCTF representatives and members of the solidarity movement in British Columbia culminated in the creation that year of CoDevelopment Canada, a unique NGO that would work with the BCTF to develop the relationships the federation sought to build with teachers in Latin America.

Later that year, the BCTF's then past president, Larry Kuehn, travelled to Central America on a fact finding

mission with leaders of teachers' unions from Ontario and Quebec and with CoDev co-founder Rick Craig. They sought to learn more about the situation of teachers in Central America and to find out how Canadian teachers might provide useful support to their counterparts there. Mr. Kuehn's meetings with members of teachers federations sharpened his interest in expanding BCTF's support for teachers throughout the region, support that would enable them to maintain their beleaguered organizations and stand up to the repression teachers were experiencing everywhere except in Nicaragua. This trip launched the development of more formal partnerships between teachers federations in British Columbia and Central America.

As CoDev did not have its own people in Central America, it collaborated closely with several experienced CUSO co-operants working in the field. In this way, it was able to establish connections, deepen its own political analysis, and begin to cultivate the trust required to build effective long-term partnerships.

In 1987, two BCTF women teachers travelled to Peru to meet members of the Education Workers' Union (SUTEP). They were particularly interested in speaking with the women teachers who had appeared in a dramatic magazine photograph depicting military violence against Peruvian teachers. They discovered that the executive of the Peruvian Teachers Federation consisted exclusively of men despite the fact that 80 per cent of Peruvian teachers were women. It took much perseverance to convince the executive to grant the BCTF delegation a meeting with the women teachers featured in the magazine.

When finally it was arranged, the Peruvian teachers described their

efforts to organize and empower women, including teachers, at the neighbourhood level. Their efforts included helping women organize group child care so mothers could earn income outside the home; they provided literacy classes and taught women about their rights. They encouraged women teachers to be active in their union locals. The Canadian women listened, and the two groups discussed how they might work together.

From this meeting a partnership developed in which CoDev provided resources to SUTEP's women's committee to increase women's participation in the union and enhance their leadership skills. The project also contributed funds for a secretariat to help implement the women's program. Male resistance to projects for women diminished as the men saw participation by women members increase and the union infrastructure grow stronger. Over time, women teachers became members of the union executive. Increasing participation by women strengthened the unions, bolstering their ability to advocate for social change. CoDev's teacher-based programming eventually became entirely focused on women's empowerment and leadership development - as teachers, organized workers, and family and community members. As the women became more active in their unions, advocacy by the unions and other popular organizations came to focus increasingly on gender equity and the rights of women and children in society at large.

Meanwhile, back in British Columbia, CoDev's institutional growth and development was slow but steady. The partnership between BCTF and CoDev provided the new NGO with an institutional base of funding. The organization's first project proposal to the Canadian International Development

Agency was co-sponsored by Inter Pares, another Canadian NGO. Since then, CoDev has received matching funds from CIDA on a regular basis. During its early years, CoDev was largely a volunteer organization with an unpaid, part-time director and a very active board, but no staff. In 1989, a single coordinator was hired. More staff have since been added — currently there are three — and CoDev's institutional culture has evolved from an early phase of informal community activism to a more professional style of management.

The CoDev board is composed of individuals who come from sectors strategic to the agency's work: unions, community organizations and First Nations. While board members do not represent their organizations, they are intentionally recruited to help CoDev strengthen and deepen its relationships with its northern partners. This in turn helps diversify the board as northern partnerships expand. There are no southern representatives on CoDev's board.

For the first eight years of its existence, CoDev received funding from the BCTF on a project-by-project basis. It also received an administration fee. The dollar value of project funding fluctuated from year to year, and southern partners suggested that their planning and project implementation would become more stable if a multi-year commitment could be obtained. CoDev therefore proposed that northern partners assume a three-year funding and partnership commitment with a southern partner. While some members resisted this change, most were in favour, as they believed it would facilitate long-term commitments to southern partners. Three-year funding cycles were begun in 1994.

*"The long term really means a lot in development work. It takes*

*a long time to get processes started and to consolidate southern institutions. And people are very busy. Some of the unions we support are working at the edge, dealing with emergencies, their leaders in jail, etc. You have to have the patience to say "Well, if it doesn't work now, then we need the flexibility to work on something else for a while, and then come back to this part later."*

Larry Kuehn,  
BCTF Research Director

### III. THE CONCEPT

*The most valuable aspect of CoDev is the delivery system — a mechanism to provide a human link to people in the south and to raise awareness here in British Columbia.*

Julia Golden, CoDev co-founder

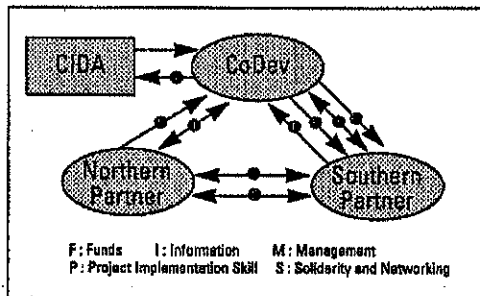
CoDev's partnership model developed in part out of the BCTF's need for a competent intermediary to plan and implement Latin American development projects and relationships. The federation did not have the capacity to undertake development programming. Nor did its staff have the language skills or knowledge and experience of Latin America. The new NGO drew on the experiences of local teachers and others who had been active in solidarity with Nicaragua. This solidarity experience provided important elements which became part of CoDev's programming. This included facilitating exposure tours for British Columbians to Latin America so they might deepen their awareness and strengthen their commitment. The participants were also expected to educate people in their union locals and communities when they returned. And CoDev hoped the momentum of the solidarity

movement would encourage participants to seek long-term relationships with teachers' organizations in Latin America. From the start, the mandate focused on promoting "sustainable partnerships between Canadian organizations and their counterparts in Latin America."

The result was a trilateral framework for partnership that distinguished CoDev from most other Canadian NGOs. This trilateral relationship consists of several elements — the three-way sharing of information (I); networking between the northern and southern partners (S); the provision of funds from CIDA to CoDev and from CoDev to southern partners (F); the transfer of management skills from CoDev to southern partners (M); and the implementation of projects by southern partners on CoDev's behalf (P).

### TRILATERAL PARTNERSHIP MODEL

In this model, both the northern and southern actors are expected to take responsibility for their relationship, including direct contacts not mediated by CoDev. The organization ignites and supports these relationships, and assumes contractual responsibility for projects funded by CIDA and northern partners; it is also financially responsible to CIDA for making sure projects with southern partners are properly implemented. CoDev also provides technical expertise, management skills and language facilities. And it has



developed the country-specific political knowledge that elicits the trust of both its southern and northern partners. As the partners work together, CoDev facilitates their communication, helping to grease the wheels of the relationships. It offers the partners regular political and economic analysis on country and sector situations. As a recent CIDA evaluation notes, CoDev is primarily a broker of north-south partnerships:

CoDev's broker role essentially consists of finding and matching compatible partners with a shared vision and goals, who can relate to each other around a common project and problem context .... Once matched, partners are expected to engage in mutual learning while helping one another .... Trust is reflected in the self-reliance of southern partners, who implement projects with minimum interference ... Partners are consulted frequently in the process of needs assessment, problem analysis, project design, implementation and evaluation ... Partnership means that southern partners have a voice in the north and that their views will be heard through CoDev-managed development education projects.<sup>1</sup>

Underlying this approach is an assumption that development is more than a matter of material advancement — that it is also about skill development, ongoing learning, developing problem-solving capacities. The approach also assumes that these processes are enhanced by mutually beneficial international relationships. And, as CoDev board member Al Blakey puts it, "development is about helping southern partners challenge the power structures in their own

<sup>1</sup> Institutional Evaluation of CoDevelopment Canada, 1994; PLAN:NET

societies in order to achieve more equity."

CoDev consciously chooses to work with popular, representative social organizations in both northern and southern societies, because it sees them as the foundations of countervailing power. In much of Latin America, nascent democracies are stymied by a legacy of authoritarian political culture and limited scope for the participation in civil society of groups whose presence could provide the requisite checks and balances on concentrations of economic, political and military power. In this context, representative social organizations such as teachers federations or women's groups are critical. They give voice to important sectors of the population and help build civil society. They are critical interlocutors in such national debates as those concerning the structural adjustment policies of the World Bank. At times, they also find themselves targets of state or parastatal repression.

CoDev's work in the field of education, with its emphasis on the promotion of women, grows out of a sense of the strategic importance of these issues. In the south, teachers federations provide fundamental public services and are often the principal advocates for universal public education in nations where many people have no access to basic education. CoDev considers gender equality essential to both public education and sustainable human development. In fact, the NGO believes that its greatest contribution has probably been in enabling women to participate in and benefit from the development process.

#### **IV. AN EVOLVING FOCUS ON GENDER**

From the start, CoDev has stressed issues of gender and work with

women in its trilateral relationships. In part, this emphasis grew out of the BCTF's own experience with its Status of Women Program, which sought to increase the participation and leadership of women teachers in the union. The BCTF had learned that increasing women's participation was an effective way to strengthen teachers' unions. This experience coincided with a burgeoning awareness in the south, on the part of women generally, and women teachers specifically, that it was important to work on gender issues. In many Latin American countries, the union leadership has been composed almost entirely of men, despite the fact that 80 to 90 per cent of teachers are women. It is a situation that Larry Kuehn, former BCTF president and its current research director, has seen before:

Sometimes the men who have traditionally led unions are not very happy about the fact that there is money for women's programs. We've been through these kinds of discussions in our own union. These issues don't scare us away. If you go back 30 years in the BCTF, you see the same pattern as in many Latin American countries today — almost all men in the leadership, while the majority of teachers are women. The union will be stronger and better able to represent its members if it has more women participating in its leadership. To the degree that women's interests are left out, the union is simply weaker.

Today, the BCTF-CoDev support for southern teachers federations is focused on women's secretariats, or women's commissions within the federations, and on other institutionalized mechanisms to ensure women's participation. More recently, CoDev, the BCTF and the southern partners have become aware of the need for more

explicit gender training to address the barriers to gender equity, beyond issues of institutional participation, both in unions and in society at large.

## V. MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN LATIN AMERICA

CoDev and BCTF have been instrumental in providing the resources required by women teachers to advance and consolidate their participation in local, national and regional organizations. In Nicaragua, women teachers were the first to win executive status for their Women's Secretariat; this means that the Secretariat's work is financed by the union. Other women's secretariats or commissions have since proceeded to push for executive status. In Guatemala, the Guatemalan Educational Workers Union (STEG) once had no women on its executive committee. Now, three of the nine executive members are women. In Costa Rica, women hold 50 per cent of union executive positions. Peruvian women teachers have also significantly increased their representation on the teachers federation executive. This is an illustration of the increasing self-confidence and assertiveness of women teachers and the advantages of increased regional networking precipitated by CoDev training programs and institutional support.

Women teachers' secretariats from some Central American countries began to meet once a year in 1992. The first meeting took place in Nicaragua. The following year, another was held in Guatemala. In August 1995, the Central American Federation of Teachers (FOMCA) formally approved the Central American Women Teachers' Secretariat. In 1994, CoDev and the BCTF co-sponsored *Intercambio 94*, a conference that

brought 11 women from 10 Latin American teachers' organizations together with representatives from the Canadian Teachers Federation and provincial teachers federations. Participants discussed the impact of the global economy on health, education and social services in each of their countries.

Solidarity is another aspect of the trilateral relationship with proven results. As Soledad Lozano, a leader of Peru's education workers' union, SUTEP explains:

During the "auto-coup" of [President Alberto Fujimori] in 1992, two SUTEP members, myself and another union leader, were kidnapped and held for 15 days by Peruvian security forces in our own offices. CoDev, the BCTF and the Canadian Teachers Federation contacted the Peruvian authorities and demanded our release and protection. International action prevented the authorities from taking us to prison and we were eventually released.

Latin American teachers have also drawn some useful lessons from the experiences of their British Columbian counterparts. For example, the current process of decentralization of education in Latin America, which shifts the funding of education to municipalities and frees national governments from responsibility for this service, is raising concerns about disparities in resources and access to education. At the same time, decentralization is placing increased pressure on teachers' organizations to service a membership divided by geographic, economic and political barriers. The experience of the BCTF in the 1980s in dealing with a similar situation in British Columbia provided some guidance to Nicaraguan teachers on how they might strengthen their organization, ANDEN, through

a regional federated design. ANDEN was restructured in June of 1996, and the move has shown immediate benefits. It has increased the autonomy of regional teachers federations to respond to members' concerns, without sacrificing its unified presence at the national level.

## **VI. MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

British Columblans who have participated in CoDev's projects and process often report that the greatest benefit of the experience is the contact with people.

***People like CoDev because it is B.C.-based. CoDev's relationship to its members is different from that of the agency that fund-raises and you just send off your money to support the work they are doing. People feel more engaged in CoDev's work. Unions can pass a resolution to donate funds to a good cause, but it is more meaningful when they decide to actually raise money for a specific project they are engaged with. The union members get to know the project partners and learn a great deal in the process. We learn how they do things, we develop joint strategies and we gain a better understanding of economic and political issues and how they affect our jobs.***

Rhonda Spence,  
CoDev Board member

This is an experience common to many NGOs. In the case of CoDev, however, there is an added component: the immediacy and the relevance that energizes north-south relations when the players share the same kind of livelihood. The CoDev model gives Canadians a special appreciation of southern realities through the sector

linkage; union people, for example, develop a dialogue with other union people, very often discussing the same issues from similar trade union cultures. CoDev believes these relationships enhance the quality of its development work.

Through their involvement with CoDev, trade unionists in British Columbia have become attuned to what is going on in the outside world. International issues are a customary feature of union meetings and provincial assemblies. People identify with the projects in Central America and Peru. They have gained a deeper understanding of globalization.

CoDev and its partners place a high priority on raising awareness in Canada about the life conditions, struggles and successes of southern partners. Educational work is carried out in a variety of ways; but the one with perhaps the greatest impact is international exchanges.

Visits from the south to the north are also part of the CoDev model. In 1995, for example, there were six such visits ranging from seven days to four weeks. All of these involved partners in British Columbia and related to the education work they wanted to do with their memberships.

To further its development education goals, specifically to reach teachers and students, CoDev has developed materials for use with intermediate level students in British Columbia schools on several Latin American themes. The materials are targeted to fit the guidelines proposed by the B.C. Education Ministry. These curriculum materials are prepared by teachers associated with CoDev, who draw on resources from their Latin American colleagues, thus guaranteeing that the materials include a southern perspective.

The *Children of Peru* curriculum is particularly successful. This Social Studies unit has been recommended by the Education Ministry, and more than 700 copies have been purchased by schools. CoDev also produces literacy materials that focus on situations in many countries around the world. The most recent of these is *Shaping the 21st Century: Social Change and Global Issues in Canada and Latin America*. CoDev is currently developing a literacy text entitled *Community Development Success Stories in B.C. and Overseas*. The texts are also used by ESL teachers.

Curriculum development is a two-way street. Having seen some of the curriculum units prepared by CoDev for use in B.C. schools, Nicaraguan teachers are now analyzing their own textbooks for gender-role stereotyping, and the BCTF has provided resources for this work.

CoDev maintains a high commitment to development education work, which it sees as an investment in sustainability. Acquiring international awareness and knowledge increases the commitment of northern partners to long-term working relations. It helps build the interest and commitment of northern constituencies that is necessary to sustain international work. As CoDev staff member Karen Smith notes:

Development education is critical. The partnership model is great, but the educational materials reach a larger number of young people. We'll probably see the impact 10 years from now when the current students grow up.

## VII. LESSONS LEARNED: STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

### STRENGTHS

The CoDev experience offers many lessons for other NGOs.

#### 1. *The trilateral model*

The trilateral model promotes programming that is grounded in the priorities of both the southern and northern partners. CoDev, as NGO, is only one of the decision makers. It facilitates relationships, but stays out of the way. For example, the South North Women's Conference Intercambio 1994, was proposed by the partner organizations, who later asked CoDev to co-sponsor this event.

#### 2. *Nature of the partnership*

The nature of this partnership helps avoid paternalism and increases the sensitivity of northern organizations to the insights and contributions of their southern counterparts. Southern groups have said they appreciate the reciprocal relationships more than the financial aspects of the partnership.

#### 3. *Promotion of women*

By focusing on the promotion of women, CoDev's work unleashes the energies of a critical part of civil society that has historically been marginalized. While not entirely devoid of conflict and tension, CoDev's promotion of gender issues has been sensitive to cultural impediments in Latin America's male-dominated unions. Concrete indicators of success include increases in the proportion of women elected to executive positions at national, regional and local levels; increases in the proportion of women at meetings not specifically for women; and the appearance of new activities to address such issues as the status of women, gender socialization in the schools, national democratization and education policy.

#### **4. Replicability of the model**

The model also appears to be replicable, as evidenced by the expansion of CoDev activities into new areas. For example, CoDev and health sector partners such as the B.C. Health Sciences Association and the B.C. Hospital Employees Union have looked at the fact that national health unions are weak or absent in many Latin American countries. Considering that health is an important issue in both the south and the north, and that women's organizations are increasingly dynamic and gaining a clearer gender perspective in many Latin American countries, CoDev has selected as partners for B.C. health unions several southern women's organizations that are implementing health programs with women. In Guatemala, for example, these organizations are working with women who work in the ever-expanding assembly plant (maquila) sector. The project provides education that seeks to enable the women workers to improve their personal and family health. Moreover, the women learn about their rights as women and as workers, thereby developing greater self-esteem. Later they may seek support to organize in their workplaces and to learn about collective bargaining strategies. The south-north link between health workers could become very important in their future development.

#### **LIMITATIONS**

Inevitably, there are some limitations to the approach that CoDev has pursued.

##### **1. Limit to the number of partnerships**

Given the goal of establishing long-term, sustainable, high-quality relationships between north and south, CoDev has found that there is a limit to the number of partnerships that can be

maintained at any one time. The work is very labour intensive, requiring consultation with both southern and northern partners as linkages are developed and projects realized.

##### **2. Changes to the model**

The trilateral model is still evolving. The inclusion of southern partners on CoDev's board in the future might strengthen the model.

##### **3. Communication**

Language barriers can also limit the possibilities. Most northern partners do not speak Spanish, and southern partners often do not have facility in English. Whereas partnerships in such regions as Southern Africa — BCTF teachers have been involved directly in consulting and training for teachers unions in Namibia and South Africa — where English is a working language are possible without a go-between, CoDev's communication role in Latin America is essential.

##### **4. Support needed for women**

CoDev has made some adjustments in its focus on women. Before the 1995-96 external evaluation was carried out with SUTEP in Peru, the training of women teachers focused on leadership skills. Although this training increased women's participation in the union, including on the executive, it did not really address questions of gender — issues of women's rights and human rights, gender role stereotyping, and the role of the education system and of the teacher in perpetuating inequitable gender relations. The evaluation was implemented by a Lima-based women's centre experienced in gender issues and gender training. Follow-up to the evaluation has included the development of an orientation guide with a gender perspective for all future training of women teachers by the Women Secretariat. The guide systematized the rich experiences and reflections of the women from

different provinces and provided a much needed mechanism to sustain and develop a clearer gender focus in the Secretariat's activities. Recent evaluations of CoDev's work with women teachers' secretariats in Central America have revealed similar needs to deepen the gender focus of the work.

#### **5. Other involvement for Southern partners**

Southern partners in this model have strengths that are sometimes also limitations. Southern unions, for example, are on the front line of structural adjustment programs and cuts in government spending. This in itself keeps them busy. In addition, as representative social actors, they also occasionally go on strike to advance or defend the rights of their members. The result is that there are sometimes delays in the implementation of projects.

#### **6. Funds to support projects**

While the model tries to promote sustainable relationships that are not at the mercy of fluctuations in funding, long term sustainability of CoDev's programs may nevertheless be threatened by fiscal restraint and donor fatigue in Canada. In recent years, the Canadian public's interest in Latin America has waned. Nonetheless, the quality of the relationships CoDev has helped build may help it sustain its programs even in hard times.

### **VIII. CONCLUSION**

CoDev's emphasis on promoting gender equity contributes significantly to sustainable human development. Increased participation by women in leadership positions and specific gender training supports the practical needs and strategic interests of women and children.

In addition, CoDev's work, both in the north and the south, supports broader social equity (class, race, culture, as well as gender). For example, in Peru, as women teachers formalized the Women's Committee within SUTEP, and took positions on the union executive, they placed issues of gender and racial equity on the union agenda. The union is now raising these same issues as proposals for reform to the educational curriculum of the country. Teacher's organizations have also been important advocates for universal education in their countries.

CoDev's work contributes to the strengthening of civil societies. By facilitating north-south partnerships and by channelling material resources to southern partners, CoDev reinforces important social institutions such as teachers federations, women's organizations and unions in several Latin American countries. This institutional consolidation facilitates the work of key social change agents and popular organizations. While these southern partners contribute to local and national development processes, their activities also strengthen civil society and contribute to the foundations of democracy and respect for fundamental political, social, economic and cultural rights.

The partnership model engages northern and southern partners in a process of mutual learning while they work to help one another. Partnership means that southern partners have a voice in the north, and that their agendas are respected. The programming work in the South feeds important education and awareness building processes in Canadian organizations and amongst youth--laying the foundation for sustained North-South partnerships of international solidarity and cooperation.