

appropriate technologies. Some examples of appropriate technology are bajareque construction, irrigation ditches, contouring, food caloric symbiosis, terraces, management of organic matter and others that are the byproduct of the intercultural sharing process and not antigoods and antiservices such as pollution, erosion, deforestation, mass movements and others. If these negative factors are produced, the NGOs are creating deterioration and not development.

These were the main new guidelines given to NGOs in the 1978 and the NRC expected them to be observed at the local community level. The NRC expected mistakes derived from the interpretation of these concepts, but NRC realized that mistakes don't mean failures, but the need for a new strategy to correct and achieve an objective.

Policy With Respect to Conditions Under Which Aid Would
be Offered to Guatemalans

The NRC wanted foreign aid to go directly to the communities through NGOs. Experience with bilateral government to government aid programs, such as AID, CIDA, World Bank and others, had proved unsatisfactory when the funds were managed by Guatemalan executive units.

In addition, foreign bureaucracies, with large and expensive overhead, required extensive paperwork intended to assure a degree of program rationality, honesty and achievement. This paperwork and the standardization it fostered retarded negotiations to obtain donations or loans for affected communities. When all the bureaucratic requirements were met, funds from foreign governments or international organizations were deposited with and managed by the Guatemalan government bureaucracy. This meant an additional slow-down in reconstruction projects, high administrative costs and very little real investment in actual projects. It became evident that programs that were fully controlled by the government and

that did not allow communities to develop their own capacities and managerial skills, and did not develop local capacity to look for funding in the future, did not achieve development.

Some government to government bilateral programs were judged by the NRC to be ineffective, bureaucratized and paternalistic with high social and economic cost. Other programs based on loans from a few international banks were believed to be still more inefficient and over regulated. Nevertheless, valuable technical and economic assistance were provided by the International Development Bank and by the U. S. Agency for International Development.

The NRC could not wait for months to negotiate donations and loans from other governments or international agencies and had to rely on Guatemalan government funds or on private funds from Guatemalan or foreign sources, or on funds made immediately available by friendly countries such as the U.S.A., Venezuela and West Germany. The Guatemalan government by law had appointed different Guatemalan institutions to negotiate donations, loans and other funds. Regarding foreign aid, the GSNCEP managed bilateral government to government agreements and international loans and the NRC managed agreements between the Guatemalan government and NGOs.

The NRC established a policy in 1976 that an agreement was an aid commitment to develop or rehabilitate a community stricken by the earthquake. It tried to oppose the dependency concept of "free aid" to communities and made efforts to make sure that communities would pay something for the construction of infrastructure and services by NGOs. These funds were to be recycled as "seed funds" for future development within the proper communities. The NRC failed in their efforts to require this procedure, however, because certain rumors started by politicians advised communities not to pay for the infrastructure being built because it was free aid

accepted by the Guatemalan government and therefore the communities had the right not to pay for it. This failure of communities to conform to NRC policy created such a serious problem that some funds were never recovered, as in the cases of Comalapa, Cubulco, Sumpango and San Lucas Sacatepequez.

In addition to community resistance, this guideline requiring community contributions was not followed by many NGOs because some of them represented foreign governments and churches whose policies and attitudes toward development were shaped to satisfy foreign donors or political interests that willingly or unwillingly promoted paternalism through basing programs on charity rather than self-help. Under the circumstances of the earthquake, the NRC accepted almost all sorts of aid, including free aid which in principle it opposed as paternalistic. The policy was to obtain as much aid as possible before the "international momentum" of the earthquake was lost and attention shifted to other disasters in the world.

The NRC believed, however, that free aid means dependency on three levels. First, it creates dependency at the government level because the acceptance of goods and services represents a political commitment to the donors. Second, it removes the stimulus to produce local goods and services and therefore disrupts competition. Third, free aid is likely to produce negative cultural impacts derived from the distribution of foreign goods and services because people get used to substituting these goods for domestic products. Free aid also creates a process of deterioration in quality because people don't compete in the market to provide quality, but accept what they get free.

As a result of these potential problems, the NRC wanted free food to become "food for work," clothing to be sold at token or subsidized prices, and houses and other services to be paid for at subsidized prices so that

revolving funds to be used in the community development could be created. It believed that all free aid should have a counterpart in labor, money or matching funds. The Committee regarded free aid as positive cooperation during an emergency or relief operation, but after that, when reconstruction began, free aid meant unnecessary social and economic paternalism and made the groups receiving it weak and fragile. As a consequence of this strongly held belief, the NRC attempted to discourage free aid programs by institutions such as CARE, the Guatemalan Red Cross, ACOGUA, The Boy Scouts, CARITAS and CIDA. Nevertheless, many churches and friendly governments gave away tremendous amounts of free aid in food, clothing, houses and other services that, in the view of the committee, could have become "seed funds" for future development.

The NRC accepted free aid programs because some of them were inherited from the NEC which had approved free aid for rehabilitation programs. In other cases it accepted such programs because it did not have the political strength to oppose them. Such programs represented the humanitarian goals and foreign policies of friendly countries, and even though opposed to them, the NRC did not have the stamina or the power to stop or discontinue them.

The NRC also promoted the use of some free aid as an inducement to community organization and participation. As a result, child care, home economics, health and sanitation and educational programs were strengthened and achieved different degrees of success, especially in the urban areas and towns, but above all, in the Departments of El Progreso and Zacapa, where they were highly organized and well managed by the Social Promotion Unit of the NRC.

The main problems created by free aid, according to the NRC, derived from some NGOs with child sponsorship programs. These programs attempted

to help children by giving their families free aid in the form of food, clothing, other free goods and even money. The Committee felt that such programs made the children and their families dependent on outside sources for help, especially in the case of programs conducted during 1976 and 1977 by AMG International and Asociación Misionera Guatemala.

It is worth noting that some NGOs evolved programs that, instead of providing individual goods to a child or his/her family, started providing community services. This meant that they were initiating community development activities as an alternative to paternalistic practices followed in the past. Among these NGOs the Foster Parents Plan is worth mentioning as an organization that concentrated its activities on more positive community development projects and gave loans to cooperatives and other organized groups that have higher development goals and expectations.

Communities were encouraged to see aid and cooperation as reciprocal efforts to achieve community development. Aid through the socioeconomic mechanism of cost sharing was intended to provide a "seed fund" within the community or a "returned loan" for the development of other communities. This multiplying effort was used by AID-NRC in their lamina projects.

AID sold roofing to individuals in a community at a subsidized price. The money collected by this program was put into a community "seed fund" to be invested in community development projects. In this way an organizational structure was initiated to assist development programs. The end result of the AID program was that additional infrastructure was created as a byproduct of lamina distribution. Even though roofing materials were distributed, its main goal was community organization and participation.

Most projects developed by NGOs were subsidized and some seed funds were created. The NRC, through the National and International Coordination Unit (NICU), tried to minimize subsidies and to increase local contributions

but a few NGOs refused on the premises that the donors, private and governmental, wanted to donate aid free. In some cases, agreements were reached to satisfy all the parties, and the goods, services and infrastructure were sold at token prices. Even so, in most cases, communities wanted free aid. The Guatemalan government had historically given free aid to communities in the form of schools, potable water systems and other goods and services without requiring local contributions. As a consequence, it was very difficult for the NRC to change that paternalistic approach.

Without any doubt, the NRC, from 1976 to 1981, promoted an anti-paternalistic approach and stimulated the use of subsidies rather than free aid. Through subsidy programs, free aid was transformed into labor and seed funds, as a by-product of the process of distributing aid. Nevertheless, it was forced to accept programs where free aid was at the core for the reason expressed above.

Policy with Respect to the Assignment of Specific Responsibilities to
Specific Outside Groups

The Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) involved in the 1976 earthquake disaster were divided into three specific groups. One group specialized in impact, emergency and relief programs; another only in rehabilitation and development, and the last in both programs mentioned above. At the time of the earthquake, some NGOs such as OXFAM, World Neighbors, the Mennonites, Christian Children's Fund, Red Cross, the Maryknoll Congregation, and about fifty other NGOs were already working in Guatemala. When the earthquake occurred these organizations asked their headquarters for help and immediately started relief programs in the areas where they were working. OXFAM-World Neighbors attended to some of the most damaged parts of their working

area in Chimaltenango; the Mennonite Central Committee also helped in the Chimaltenango area. CARITAS, Christian Children's Fund, World Vision and CARE programs were nationwide but began concentrating their efforts in the communities affected by the quake. The Primitive Methodists did the same in Totonicapán and the Rural Reconstruction Movement reinforced its programs in Jalapa while parish churches covered their communities.

The NGOs and other institutions that were already in Guatemala therefore stayed in their working areas and spread their programs out from those areas. The NEC first, and the NRC later, tried to cover critically damaged areas with other Guatemalan and foreign government institutions and to assign newly arrived NGOs who wanted to cooperate to appropriate locations. The French NGO-Operation Hope went to the area of Xiquín Sinaí in Chimaltenango; Save the Children Alliance to nine municipios (counties) of El Quiché; the Boy Scouts to Bella Vista; the Rotary Club to San Pedro Sacatepéquez; Fratelli d'Italia went to Comalapa; the Aragonese Committee to Zaragoza; the Jewish community to Sanarate; Norwegian Red Cross to Patzún; the Norwegian Church Aid to San Martín Jilotepecque; AMG-International to La Verbena, Guatemala City; Food for the Hungry to Villa Nueva; the German and Austrian Red Crosses to San Juan Sacatopequez. Others, like Plenty, went to Guatemala City, San Andrés Itzapa and later to Sololá; The Seventh Day Adventists to Sta. Lucia Milpas Altas; the Episcopal Church to Zacapa; The Salvation Army to Tecpán Guatemala, and so forth.

The main reason for this distribution of NGOs was the need for immediate cooperation. Many areas were unattended and the NEC and especially NRC decided to fill the unattended critical areas on a sort of "I want help, you go to this unattended area" basis.

The Guatemalan government, with the support of other friendly governments, attended mainly to the metropolitan area of Guatemala City, the departmental capitols and some of the large municipal towns in order to establish a strategic network of relief and emergency centers and services. It was decided that NGOs and other groups would complement this governmental network by attending to other large municipal towns, most of the large villages and a few of the small villages and hamlets in order to concentrate NGO services.

There was an exception related to "squatter's settlements" in Guatemala City. These "settlements" were supported by church organizations before the earthquake and during the first hours after the earthquake these organizations contacted other larger church nuclei, like the Norwegian AID Church, the World Church Service and the World Council of Churches and concentrated their efforts on some of the "settlements" in the metropolitan area of Guatemala City.

This sort of agency assignment was not a casual decision. The NEC, but especially the NRC, wanted to decentralize rehabilitation and reconstruction activities and the NGOs were the institutions that showed the greatest willingness to go to unattended areas. Immediately, however, problems started to arise. Some of the NGOs already established in Guatemala considered their working areas as their own and they sued for increased spatial hinterlands as well as increased functions. The NEC and the NRC became judges to decide this unfortunate litigation. Some NGOs did not have the capacity to react or cope with all the problems in their areas and needed support from other NGOs, but sometimes they refused that cooperation in order to maintain their territory "untouched."

Another problem was the overlapping of functions between NGOs and

government agencies. In some cases a NGO was assigned a geographical area as well as specific functions, but later some Guatemalan government institution would arrive and claim jurisdiction over the area. In addition, many Guatemalan humanitarian committees were formed after the earthquake and were working on their own. They had resources, motivation, and a lot of private sector support. They went to the areas with easy accessibility to "help," but most of the time their services overlapped with those offered by Guatemalan governmental institutions, other friendly governments and NGOs. By the end of September 1976 most of the damaged areas were covered with very little geographical and functional overlapping. Instead of litigation, the NGOs were now coordinating their field efforts among themselves, because the NRC did not have the manpower to provide field support.

The problem of manpower was a serious one for the NRC with respect to personnel for coordination activities with NGOs. The NICU had one coordinator and two typists from 1976 to June 1978. Its Social Promotion Unit was supposed to supervise the performance of NGOs and evaluate their activities, but in addition to this it was supposed to organize at least 1200 communities so that they would participate in a reconstruction development process.

The only manpower available on a part-time basis was the social workers assigned to the Social Promotion Unit (SPU). They were trained in late 1976 and early 1977 in techniques for evaluating the quality of the infrastructure being built, the social and economic impact of reconstruction and development programs and in the promotion of better standards of life. Unfortunately, in late 1977 and early 1978, due to political conflicts,

this unit did not perform the supervisory and evaluation activities it was supposed to perform and these evaluations had to be partially done in 1978 by the PRU, using engineering staff. The evaluation only analyzed the quality of infrastructure but not its social impact.

During 1978-1979, the NICU tried to evaluate the performance of the NGOs. It asked UNICEF to sign a contract with an economist for this work but the evaluation was not completely developed due to lack of institutional support from UNICEF and from the NRC.

Other evaluations of NGO achievements have been made. One was conducted for United Nations by two architects who were lent to the NRC. They evaluated the physical infrastructure built by NGOs quantitatively and qualitatively and made a reconnaissance of the social and economic impact of NGO programs. The evaluation of social and economic impact, however, was a sub-product of the evaluation of the physical infrastructure and therefore was very general.

Still other evaluations of the role of NGOs in the reconstruction process were conducted by other organizations, such as OAS, AID and the University of Stockholm. This latter study analyzed the economic efficiency of the programs carried out by Guatemalan governmental institutions and compared them with the efficiency reached by NGOs. It clearly showed that at least a 2.5 to 1 ratio in favor of the NGOs existed in economic efficiency.

The NICU of the NRC also conducted its own evaluations during 1976, 1977, 1978 and early 1979. Coordinators received reports from some NGOs and went to check them in the field. It was a well known fact that

NGOs reported less construction of infrastructure and other activities than they actually carried out, but the percentage difference was very small. Most of the time their performance was substantially better than governmental performance and their achievements in the development process were also greater in spite of the fact that they sometimes did not follow the guidelines of the NRC.

As in any process, there were mistakes, mainly in the building of physical infrastructure and these mistakes became mechanisms used to attack the NRC and the NGOs by governmental institutions such as BANVI, the GSNCEP and the Ministries of communications and Public Works, and Health and Public Assistance. For these institutions the issue was not how much good the NGOs and the NRC had done for the communities and the country, but how many mistakes they had made. Mistakes were exaggerated to discredit NGO operations.

The NRC had only a moderate capacity to evaluate and supervise NGO programs. It had to accept cautiously the evaluation of other impartial institutions that did specific evaluations. All of these showed that programs carried out by the NGOs were more socially effective, had more economic efficiency, had a better quality, and achieved more rehabilitation of the infrastructure than the ones done by the Guatemalan government. Unfortunately, these advantages also exposed weaknesses in Guatemalan government programs carried out by the Ministries of State. For example, it was shown that government programs were at least two times more expensive; they took more time, were paternalistic and did

not organize communities as development entities and therefore, the momentum created by the earthquake for development was lost. These negative comparisons between government and non-government programs provoked further, more serious attacks from the Guatemalan government bureaucracy on the NRC and led to an eventual lack of governmental and political support for its programs.

Guatemalan Governmental Programs Involved in Reconstruction

As has been stated, the Guatemalan government did not want to create a "Super Ministry of Reconstruction" to rehabilitate and develop the region damaged by the earthquake, but to use the existing institutional structure and reinforce it by means of the NRC, which would be a decision-maker and coordinating unit as well as the highest authority for all reconstruction activities.

The President of Guatemala is the President of the NRC. That means that the Ministries of State are under him and that the Executive Director of the NRC represents the President. As a result, the Director of the NRC has the power and dominion the President wishes to give or transfer to him. As an organization with defined lines of authority and responsibility, the NRC was well conceived. The NRC and its four authorities, the President of Guatemala, the Executive Director, the General Coordinator and the Representative of the Cooperative Systems, decided policies and formed strategies and mechanisms to be used in the reconstruction process. This top authority structure was supported by the scientific and technical staff of the NRC, acting as Unit Coordinators. Using this structure, the Committee attempted to coordinate all disaster-related activities, including the ones carried out by the

Ministries of State. These Ministries provided the operational units to perform building activities and the rehabilitation of infrastructure and services.

Through the General Coordinator, the Minister of Public Finances, the NRC obtained the advice of the GSNCEP in economic and financial matters, and through this association integrated reconstruction activities with those derived from the National Plans for Development 1975-1979, 1980-1984.

It is clear that the major weakness of the NRC was in not having its own operational units capable of actually carrying out reconstruction activities. On the other hand, if such had been the case it would have meant managing funds. Money brings power but also potential corruption. The NRC perhaps could have rehabilitated more infrastructure by managing its own staff and money but it also might have been tempted to become another "bureaucratic" institution serving no social meaning or purpose, and the impact on the development of communities might have been very small.

Guatemalan Governmental Involvement in Financing the Reconstruction Process

From the issuance of bonds, taxation and by rearrangement of the national budget, the Guatemalan government, in 1976, obtained an initial \$312.0 million dollars for the reconstruction process. In addition it obtained about \$157.0 million dollars in loans from international banks and friendly governments and about \$10.7 million dollars in donations to emergency and relief operations. From these sources the reconstruction process received a total of approximately \$480.0 million dollars to

initiate programs in 1976 and 1977. Of these, about \$143.5 million were put into actual operating Funds for Reconstruction, FEER.

In addition to this amount, the NGOs invested amounts estimated at between \$130.0 to \$150.0 million dollars and insurance companies paid benefits of about \$36.0 million dollars on insured losses. This means that the minimum total amount of money put into the reconstruction process was approximately \$676.0 million dollars. This represents the largest and most productive effort directed towards development and reconstruction activities ever invested in a five year period in the history of Guatemala. In five years, but especially from April 1976 to June 1979, more infrastructure was built than in any previous period of equal length. It also permitted an organized community development process on a large scale that could have future consequences for development if the results of this effort were not destroyed by the political violence which began to emerge in 1979 and 1980.

Instead of handling the funds itself, the NRC decided to finance the rehabilitation of infrastructure by allocating funds to institutions responsible for specific activities or by transferring obligations to operational units of the Guatemalan government that could carry them. Housing programs in the urban area were assigned to the National Housing Bank. This institution received about 50.0 million dollars of the 85.2 million it was originally supposed to get for housing projects. By late 1980 it had not completed the work expected on its projects due to bureaucratic inefficiency, the lack of urban lots and to institutional reorganization.

In rural areas, BANDESA was responsible for housing programs and had a budget of approximately 43.0 million dollars. According to the Committee, it carried out its programs in a very positive and successful manner. Other banks received 10.0 million dollars to provide housing loans at four percent interest. This and related programs, oriented toward the emerging middle class and to the poor, have been successful in the view of NRC.

The total cost of the housing projects developed by NGOs and other institutions has not been determined exactly, but the minimum investment is estimated at about 45.0 million U. S. dollars, including administrative costs. These programs built approximately 30,000 permanent houses and about 143,000 "temporary" ones. Another 5.0 million dollars was guaranteed to the banking system in order to cover up to 50 percent of the private loans the banking system made to individuals. The private banking system also provided close to 63.4 million dollars to upper middle class persons to reconstruct or rehabilitate their houses. The total amount that has been invested in housing projects may add up to 251.0 million dollars, or approximately 34 percent of the total investments made in the reconstruction process. It is estimated that there were well over 85,000 beneficiaries of these housing programs.

The rebuilding of community facilities was carried out mainly by three institutions. The Municipality of Guatemala City was in charge of the reconstruction and rehabilitation of all potable water, drainage and sewage systems, chlorination plants, streets, avenues and other services in the metropolitan area of Guatemala City. INFOM was in

charge of providing economic and technical support to rehabilitate municipal buildings, potable water, drainage and other services in departmental capitals, and large towns and villages. UNEPAR was responsible for small potable water systems in small villages and hamlets in rural areas.

Government buildings, communications services, highways, bridges, roads, telephone lines, etc. were rehabilitated primarily by the Ministry of Public Works and Communications with the help of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Mexican Highway Departments (in the case of a section of the Atlantic Highway and from Patzicia to Godinez). Some of this work was done by operational units of this Ministry but it also invited the private sector to bid on larger projects.

Educational and health facilities were sometimes built by this Ministry or by the executive units of the ministries responsible for health and educational activities. Unfortunately, in the Guatemalan government there was considerable duplication, overlapping and malfunctioning with respect to the construction of infrastructure because almost every ministry created its own operational unit to perform construction work.

Problems Faced by the NRC With Respect to NGOs

One of the most important problems faced by the NRC in dealing with NGOs and with the rest of the Guatemalan government arose because of the presidential election of 1978. Two of the four top executives and some technical staff members were selected by middle of the road political parties as candidates in the political campaign of 1978. Official support

from the political party in power was provided, however, to the former head of the National Emergency Committee. This meant that several of the major figures in the reconstruction and emergency relief process opposed each other in the presidential election.

The issue behind the political struggle in this campaign was a difference of opinion concerning the future of Guatemala. The NRC wanted to improve the quality of life of Guatemalans. To pursue this goal, the NRC had created a new concept of development for Guatemala based not only on economic growth but also on grass roots community development. During the pre-earthquake period, Guatemala had been improving in real economic terms and private sector business was flourishing. Social progress, however, was not taking place in the rural communities of the country. The NRC attempted to create a democratic climate that would allow all social classes, and especially those with low incomes, to participate in economic development. NRC policies were supportive with respect to the private sector and large business enterprises but these policies also generated a vast grass roots social development program in order to encourage and to spread growth in economic benefits to the poor.

By doing this the NRC felt it was presenting an alternative to violent social upheaval which emphasized a pluralistic democratic society developing through peaceful mechanisms. Unfortunately the two radical extremes - left and right - attempted to undermine this middle of the road approach. Former members of the NRC feel that history has proven that the NRC was correct in predicting the growth of political violence after 1978.

As an outgrowth of the political campaign of 1978, and a growing fear of events in El Salvador and Nicaragua, Guatemalan institutions with different political loyalties and interests began to oppose decisions of the NRC which were regarded as being too far right for some and too far left for others. For the most part, the people of communities outside Guatemala City resented this situation. To them, the NRC represented their genuine aspirations and needs, a point of view that the Guatemalan government had not attended to for many years. Nevertheless, the participation of some members of the NRC in the presidential election and the events that followed it created a struggle within the Committee as other Guatemalan institutions attempted to dominate and use the Committee as a political instrument for sectarian purposes.

The second Executive Director of the Committee tried to restore the main objectives of NRC after the political campaign, but because he wished to depoliticize the Committee, he was dismissed. This struggle continued into 1981, when the NRC still faced problems created by its own Social Promotion Unit which had many politicians on its staff. In spite of the efforts of the present Executive Director and some of the coordinators to keep the Committee as non-political as possible, the NRC is still torn by internal political conflict. Although the NICU tried to protect NGOs from these problems, it did so at a very high credibility cost, both with respect to other Guatemalan governmental units and NGOs.

Another problem that the NRC faced after the election of 1978 was the loss of most of its qualified personnel. After 1981, it no longer had scientists and technicians with leadership ability, knowledge and

field experience. Most of these highly qualified people were forced to leave their jobs due to political pressures, defamatory rumors, accusations, and threats that in some instances even created risks for the lives of some Committee personnel. This lack of qualified manpower able to operate at a conceptual level produced negative feedback into programs and local communities which began to be seen as mere objects of development rather than participants in the process. Late in 1981 the NICU still had a conceptual perspective mainly due to inertia from the 1976-1979 conceptual push, but outside the NRC, especially in Europe and the U.S.A., it was well known that the original goals of community development had been transformed into theoretical exercises in planning and in satisfying the personal aspirations of some of the staff.

In 1980 and 1981 the NRC lost much of its coordinating structure and operational framework. In spite of the political problems in late 1976, 1977, 1978 and early 1979, the NRC was very effective in its activities because of its internal cohesiveness. It reached communities and solved most of the operational problems that arose. Communities were given inspiration and motivation to work. Since late 1979, however, the NRC has not had much official support from the Guatemalan government to proceed with its development oriented reconstruction plan and has depended on the NGOs to provide most of its rural community development activities.

Since 1979 NGOs themselves have faced problems caused by increased patterns of violence stemming from both guerrilla and anti-guerrilla activity. Some NGOs have frozen or closed down their activities in

areas such as El Quiché, Chimaltenango and Sololá; others have transferred projects to the eastern part of the country where minor earthquakes derived from volcanic activities frequently produced severe damage. Some have also abandoned the country altogether. The political violence which has gradually spread throughout the highlands of Guatemala since 1978 has affected development reconstruction projects in many rural areas, especially in those where there was a need to build grass roots organization. The building of grass roots participatory structures had become impossible by 1980, since such groups are regarded with suspicion by left and right alike.

Some of the personnel representing NGOs have been killed, others have disappeared, and still others have fled the country. Violence has also touched the NRC and several members of its staff, including the General Secretary and some of its social workers, have been killed. This created a very difficult situation for NGOs since the NRC as their counterpart institution in the Guatemalan government had previously facilitated their work. These incidents of violence and threats of violence have produced doubts on the part of many NGOs about the future of the NRC and about the future of their own programs in Guatemala.

Some NGOs whose programs deliberately promote social change and are aimed towards improving community organization have been watched carefully by the extreme right since these activities are seen as mechanisms against right wing political philosophies, policies and goals. There is no doubt that the extreme right wants to keep communities unorganized, dispersed and at the lowest level of human energy necessary to merely survive - in other words, in extreme poverty. On the other

hand, the extreme left also sees such NGOs as entities that improve the quality of life, strengthen community participation in productive work and provide a peaceful mechanism for grass roots development. Therefore the social and economic problems that the extreme left promises solutions for diminish and the left loses credibility. The extreme left and right are also against some other NGOs because they have stimulated development through religious organizations and church groups and these entities have been sometimes attacked conceptually, politically and physically by both sides.

Another problem has arisen because NGOs can not absolutely guarantee the Guatemalan government that persons with leftist or rightist political interests have not infiltrated into their organization. This growing suspicion of NGOs has created severe problems for some organizations who, besides being attacked by the extreme left and right, are also viewed with mistrust by some Guatemalan governmental institutions.

The NRC has attempted to minimize these problems but, with very little success. NGOs are completely aware of this situation and realize the potential risks that political infiltration or rumors of such may create for their operations in Guatemala. The NRC, and especially the NICU, is the only institution that understands most of these problems and has tried to provide as much support and protection as its meager resources have permitted, but it is failing to do so.

In addition to suspicions of rightist or leftist loyalties, NGOs are seen by some Guatemalan government institutions as intruders in Guatemala and as organizations that use their programs for political

or religious proselytism, or to transfer culture, and not to promote the welfare of Guatemala. In some cases this charge has a foundation in fact since much "aid," especially from churches, is tied to evangelism, proselytism and to religious activities, and others to the promotion of paternalism, consumerism and allegiance to foreign patterns.

The NRC, through the NICU, has tried to minimize these activities. It achieved a great success in 1978 and 1979, and some in 1980. Even so, many Guatemalan government institutions believe that NGOs overlap their activities and instead of correcting the problems through an integrated approach they criticize the NGOs and create a sense of insecurity, despair and fear. The answer of the NGOs has been to abandon programs and more rarely to give the NRC the opportunity to solve the situation.

Aside from these very serious political problems, one of the biggest problems of the reconstruction process was that there was not a National Plan for Development with time scenarios and the GSNCEP had not generated a land resources use plan for the spatial occupancy of the different regions of Guatemala. Without these basic tools, the NRC could not optimize the reconstruction process. The little planning that had been done was theoretical, economically oriented and based on unreliable information. These situations produced overlapping efforts, functions, activities and geographic coverage.

This lack of a national plan was also a reflection of feuds among the ministries who did not interact among themselves but took unilateral decisions as well as initiatives that resulted in anarchy and confusion.

Such confusion and overlapping was the rule and not the exception in urban areas where the Guatemalan government concentrated most of its housing programs. NGOs operating in the cities had to cope with this situation, especially with regard to the decisions taken by BANVI in 1979-1980. The main achievement of the NRC was to minimize that anarchy and confusion but at a very high political cost to its members.

Another problem was related to labor. The NGOs trained a good deal of labor for their projects but this labor, as soon as it was competent to carry out construction activities, left rural areas for urban ones where workers could make more money. This jeopardized the development of infrastructure in rural villages and towns. As soon as the construction pace was reduced in urban areas, this labor became available again in the rural areas, but by that time the economic resources had been invested mainly in the "cabeceras municipales" (the larger central towns outside Guatemala City).

Still another problem arose because, during the reconstruction process, NGOs were very much affected by inflation and the scarcity of materials. The Guatemalan government supported its own institutions more than the NGOs, which got less attention for their request for construction materials as well as less access to subsidized imported ones. The NRC struggled to correct this situation and attained some success.

Yet another problem was associated with overcoming the effects of geographic isolation on some communities. Initially the reconstruction process really tried to open a way to development in rural communities,

and tried to decentralize activities by helping municipal towns and large villages. It did not reach most of the small villages and hamlets at the beginning because they were not accessible and probably did not have a geographically well integrated structure that could be organized so that people could participate in development programs. As a result of their spatial diffuseness, small villages did not press the NRC and this institution failed to find a mechanism to reach these villages and hamlets.

The NRC also struggled to distribute the funds for the reconstruction process by creating programs that benefitted the less economically powerful groups like the peasants and especially Indian communities. As a result, they have achieved better levels of quality of life, goods, services and other desired commodities than they had before the disaster. This approach was carried out at a crescendo pace until 1979, when due to changes in government policies these massive Guatemalan government investments no longer reached rural communities.

After 1979, small projects with high social meaning and minimum economic investment were reduced and large projects with large economic investments and little social meaning at the grass roots level were substituted for them. Rural communities during 1976, 1977 and 1978 participated actively in the reconstruction process and they were engaged in productive activities, satisfying some of their own expectations and trying to achieve more self-realization.

During the first three years following the earthquake, the reconstruction process, in spite of all its problems, carried on a sincere effort

to create a peaceful mechanism for development but after 1979 the communities were the first to realize that changes in political factors had again begun to disrupt their culture. This time, however, political aggression was aimed at erasing their achievements by violent means. As a consequence of the political conflict, communities may lose their newly found community organization and their willingness to participate. In the end, the only witness of this sincere, but faltering attempt to achieve development might be the new physical infrastructure which provides basic services to the communities as a byproduct of a reconstruction-development process that was designed to minimize the violence during 1976, 1977, 1978 and part of 1979.

To end this chapter, it is worth saying that the reconstruction process brought massive social and economic investments to the rural communities of Guatemala up until 1979-1980. After that, the only projects with these characteristics were carried out by NGOs, but the social tensions, and later the violence, may force all the NGOs to leave Guatemala, and the NRC will not have the support to keep functioning as a mechanism to rescue the original values of the reconstruction process. If that happens, it will be the end of the reconstruction process and the communities will again have to accept paternalistic approaches, not to develop, but merely to survive until another natural phenomenon or manmade event again awakens the minds and hearts of Guatemalans and the international community to the pressing needs of the Guatemalan poor.

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