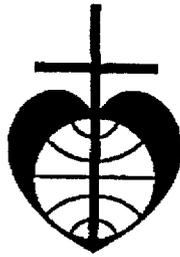


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MIDTERM EVALUATION

USAID/CRWRC Matching Grant

(FAO-0158-A-00-4062-00)

Submitted by:
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April 29, 1996

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The project evaluated in the following pages is designed to revise the Organizational Capacity Indicators used by the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) as its staff works with indigenous partner development organizations.

The activities are based on the Appreciative Inquiry approach developed at Case Western Reserve University. Under a subcontract with CRWRC, trainer/consultants from that institution have conducted workshops with CRWRC staff in four regions world-wide. That staff has in turn visited a large number of CRWRC partner organizations to learn from them their views about capacity-building and sustainability in a joint attempt to begin to identify characteristics of a capable and sustainable organization through shared inquiry into past experience. An important question in this inquiry has been the effect of the local context on that organization-building process.

The activities on the field have taken place as planned (chiefly training conferences and "listening visits) and have been highly successful to this point, with the exception of the Latin/Central America region, where difficulties unrelated to the grant activities have hindered full and enthusiastic participation. The other three regions have gathered a large amount of "raw data" from their partners, setting the stage for productive regional conferences (to be held over the next few months) at which partner representatives and CRWRC staff will work together to analyze the data, attempt to draw some preliminary conclusions, and revise existing indicators and/or formulate new ones for field testing.

Partner feedback about the process has been overwhelmingly positive, and the process itself has already done much to improve the working relationships between CRWRC and many of the partner organizations.

The institutional strengthening component of the project is on or ahead of schedule in all respects except formal research. The proposed manual is already taking shape, staff training has been completed, and a bibliography regarding capacity and sustainability has been developed. Some of the knowledge gained from the field implementation portion of the project activities has contributed to capacity building within CRWRC itself.

While some remedial work must be done regarding formal research and the field implementation in Latin/Central America, on the whole the project is accomplishing what was expected and more. At this point all indications are that the project will be successfully completed and that the larger PVO/NGO community will profit from the experience of CRWRC as it presents its findings at the final conference projected to take place in the final month of the grant period.

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***ACRONYMS AND NAMES
APPEARING IN THIS REPORT***

Acronyms:

AI: Appreciative Inquiry

CCI: Community Capacity Indicators

CRWRC: The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (US office located in Grand Rapids, Michigan)

CWRU: Case Western Reserve University (Cleveland, Ohio)

G.E.M.: Global Excellence in Management (a USAID-supported program of CWRU, in which CRWRC is participating)

LT: listening tour (also referred to as "listening visits")

OCI: Organizational Capacity Indicators

Persons:

Jim Ludema - CWRU trainer/consultant

Craig Wishart - CWRU trainer/consultant

Regional Managers:

William Postma (Asia)

Ivan De Kam (East Africa)

Joe (Jose) Lamigo (West Africa)

Caspar Geisterfer (Latin/Central America)

Regional Directors:

Beverly Abma (West Africa)

Karl Westerhof (Asia)

Douglas Seebeck (East Africa)

Jim Boldenow (Latin/Central America)

International Program Director:

Gary Nederveld

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF PROJECT AND USAID INVOLVEMENT

In June 1994, The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) submitted a revised matching grant proposal to BHR/PVC/MGD of USAID and subsequently received funding of \$600,000 over the three-year life of the project. The Cooperative Agreement is FAO-0158-A-00-4062-00 and its effective dates are September 30, 1994 - September 29, 1997. CRWRC had received one previous matching grant, for its programs in Belize and Bangladesh (1989-92), and the current project sought to fulfill one of the major recommendations of that matching grant's final evaluation (see below).

GOAL AND PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of the project is the improvement of CRWRC's system of Organizational Capacity Indicators so that partner organizations and CRWRC's own field staff, serving as consultants to those organizations, are able to better describe, strengthen and monitor their performance. This effort flows from a recommendation made in the final evaluation of CRWRC's previous matching grant that its monitoring system be improved "by allowing the partner organization to monitor itself while at the same time showing clearly what has been done and what remains to be accomplished." It is expected that improved analysis of performance will lead to increased partner organization capacity, which will in turn lead to the fulfillment of CRWRC's ultimate goal for this project - enhancement of the sustainability potential of these indigenous partner organizations.

IMPLEMENTATION OF PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES

To arrive at a revised set of organizational capacity indicators, CRWRC and USAID agreed to the following activities for this project:

- a. undertake an assessment study of the partner organizations to help clarify the concept and provide the technical assistance to partner organizations as needed for organizational capacity building which will include the following:
 - defining the terms "capacity" and "sustainability"
 - researching the various stages of organizational development
 - examining the different types of organizations, including their partner relationships and make a comparative analysis of findings which will be shared with CRWRC partners
 - formulating a typology of capacities
 - identifying work already done on this topic, especially work by any indigenous/national development groups or organizations
 - determining CRWRC's place in the spectrum of organizations working on the issue of organizational capacity building, discovering where CRWRC is ahead or behind the work of other organizations on this topic, both in theory and in practice, in order

to facilitate CRWRC's learning and contributions in the NGO community.

- b. develop and install a CRWRC-specific Organizational Capacity Indicators (OCI) system, based on the revision and update of CRWRC's current skill rating scale (SRS) system — shifting away, somewhat, from the skills of individuals solely within an organization and move towards the partner group/organization as an "organism" needing to live and thrive in a given environment; it is anticipated that the development of the OCI can be used as a tool for measuring organizational capacity in other development organizations;
- c. conduct a series of regional conferences/workshops (in each of CRWRC's four regions—East Africa, West Africa, Latin/Central America, and Asia) to train CRWRC staff conducting in-depth visits to partner organizations using the Appreciative Inquiry Methodology for the implementation of development projects specifically addressing the needs and experience of CRWRC in project design, management, financial control, and evaluation;

Specifically,

- to identify CRWRC strengths in organizational capacity building, as perceived by partners
 - to identify ways to strengthen/improve what is good in current practice
 - to confirm (or call into question) current assessments of partner capacity
 - to identify partners' perceptions of capacities necessary for organizational development, effectiveness, and sustainability
 - to build ownership in both CRWRC and its partners for intentional, continuous and systematic capacity building
 - to create an organizational climate for "organizational" learning (as opposed to individual only), or improve the climate for this if it already exists
- d. develop an OCI training manual representing the concept and the experience of CRWRC and its partner groups for organizational capacity building techniques which will be shared with the wider NGO community and will also serve as a networking mechanism for CRWRC.
 - e. develop a set of organizational capacity indicators (OCI) for use with and by national partner groups (CCI);
 - f. host a conference in North America to present the OCI and the accompanying manual to the wider NGO community; and,
 - g. under the aegis of an experienced evaluation consultant develop proposed in-house evaluator's (Ellen Monsma) skills capacity via formal training (i.e., data collection, data analysis, monitoring/evaluation systems, and data management); monitoring/ evaluation curriculum will be developed at a later date, but is considered vital to the success of overall grant program.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Unlike most projects supported by the Matching Grant division of USAID, in which concrete outputs can be measured (for example, increased yield, lower malnutrition rates, or number of children vaccinated), this project involves human interaction and reflection (see project goals and purpose statements below). Therefore, rather than making the usual site visits, this mid-term evaluation is being done by CRWRC's in-house evaluator, who examined (1) numerous documents submitted by CRWRC staff during the past eighteen months, (2) reviewed correspondence and evaluation questionnaires collected during the past two months from staff and partner group representatives and made (3) personal observations during field visits. A list of the various reports submitted by field personnel is attached as Appendix A.

Also as part of the evaluation process, as agreed with its project officer at a meeting in her office on 6 November 1995, CRWRC's Regional Managers for this grant met on 12-15 February 1996, at headquarters (Grand Rapids, Michigan) to assess project progress. Their feedback was noted and discussed, and is included in this evaluation.

In the place of the "hard data" that are normally integral to a project evaluation, quotations from various project documents will be used as supporting evidence.¹ An underlying premise of the revision of the OCI is that partner organizations must participate in the preparation of the means by which their progress towards sustainability is traced if they are ever to "own" the process, making it an essential part of their organizational life. For this reason, partner feedback will figure prominently in this evaluation, in the form of quotations, along with assessments from CRWRC staff and Case Western Reserve University project consultants.²

The focus of this evaluation is chiefly the *process* undertaken by CRWRC, but will also include some preliminary findings about the project's ultimate *purpose*—an improved method of assessing partner progress towards increasing their institutional capacity and thereby their potential for sustainability. It must be emphasized, however, that any conclusions about the final "product," i.e., a revised set of organizational capacity indicators (OCI) are very preliminary at this point and should not be in any way taken as definitive.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

This evaluation will examine each of the agreed-upon activities in light of the following questions:

¹ To avoid the need for numerous footnotes or endnotes, the sources of quotations are indicated by numbers which refer to the source document's number in the list found in Appendix C.

² The Department of Organizational Behavior of the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) is the training subcontractor for this grant. CWRU consultants are providing training and advice on the use of the "appreciative inquiry" approach to creating a meaningful dialogue between CRWRC and its partner groups in order to "co-create" a revised set of OCIs.

1. What has been accomplished and was it done in a timely manner?
2. What remains to be done and what is the likelihood that it will be accomplished according to the established (Gantt) timetable?
3. What changes should be made in the project plans, if any, as the result of the responses to questions 1 and 2?

EVALUATION OF FIELD IMPLEMENTATION

PRELIMINARY CONFERENCE

Although this event took place at CRWRC's home office and was not included in the original activity plan,³ it was important for the evolution of the project. The designated Regional Managers who were to supervise the project activities in the four overseas regions gathered with regional directors, guests from other PVOs, CRWRC's project officer (Mary T. Herbert), headquarters project management staff, and other interested CRWRC personnel. This forum provided the opportunity to "walk through" an appreciative inquiry process, discuss the various activities to be implemented, reflect on the place of the project in the larger CRWRC organizational context, etc. Although it was an addition to the project plan, it was key to drawing disparate elements together to form a cohesive team. This preliminary conference could be characterized as a capacity-building event for CRWRC as a whole and especially for the regional managers who were taking on new responsibilities in a very unique and innovative project. The initiative and flexibility shown in by CRWRC is commendable.

CONFERENCE I

The first *planned* events were series of regional conferences, held during the period May-September 1995 for the purpose of acquainting CRWRC field staff with both the project itself and the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach to be used in carrying out the next series of activities—"listening visits" to partner organizations. In three of CRWRC's four regions, these conferences can be characterized as highly successful in achieving these objectives. Although many staff came to their regional conference with some misgivings about the usefulness of AI in the CRWRC international context, they went away both enthusiastic and hopeful concerning the potential for change in CRWRC's relationships with its partner groups.

Examples of participant feedback:

"There was a good deal of enthusiasm for the process and for the expected product of the three year grant work: an understanding of capacity and capacity indicators that are reflective

³ It was, however, included in the revised Gantt chart formulated later.

of indigenous, culturally-appropriate, locally-felt wishes and hopes." (Doc. 3)

"The process has exceeded my expectations. I was unsure at first of how it would go, but the staff dove in and responded enthusiastically." (Doc. 13)

"Staff enthusiasm is high for this project." (Doc. 14)

"Appreciative Inquiry can actually work—I was originally one of the worst cynics." (Doc. 10)

"Across the board participants expressed an acute interest in developing effective processes. [...] They are also eager for the development of materials to aid in this process." (Doc. 8)

For the Asia, East Africa and West Africa regions, these conferences were highly successful in their objectives. For the Latin/Central America region, the conference was less productive. The major factor leading to this was that the AI training session was part of a larger region-wide meeting to discuss organizational issues; that meant discussion of budget cuts and downsizing in this region. In that context, it was difficult for staff to become enthusiastic about a new vision for CRWRC partnership relationships. An additional negative element was the limited amount of time available to the AI activities; because of the very pressing organizational issues on the agenda, AI was given less time (approximately half) than in the other regions. The result seems to have been less staff "buy-in" there than elsewhere. As the regional manager noted, "CRWRC staff [...] did not receive sufficient exposure to Appreciative Inquiry to be very supportive of the process. There were too many unanswered questions to allow them to buy into the concept completely." (Doc. 12) This is not meant to say that the conference was a failure. In spite of a difficult situation, staff found the AI approach to be interesting and potentially useful; their feedback included these remarks:

"We have learned to humanize a system of measuring results and placed focus more on the human relationship." (Doc. 21)

"This form of appreciation will allow us better understanding of our partners and permit greater openness with them than we experience now." (Doc. 21)

Nevertheless, the Latin/Central America regional conference was a dark spot in an otherwise bright picture.

On a more positive note, an unexpected "spin-off" of the other three conferences was the application of AI on the community level in some places, in addition to its use with partner organizations during the listening visits. As trainer/consultant Jim Ludema noted, "I have been amazed by the multiplier effect; the project has grown in unexpected ways among partners and at the community level." (Doc. 13) CRWRC staff reported positive influence of AI on their work even before the listening visits officially began, as they applied AI informally in difficult situations. In one case, a CRWRC staffmember was able to complete a strategic planning process

with a partner organization in two days by using appreciative inquiry; prior to that time, he had worked with the same organization periodically over two years without accomplishing the task. A similar success was reported by a staffperson in East Africa: a village previously seen as "hopeless" and a likely candidate for termination of any attempt at development work, a relatively new staffperson took a chance, used AI, and reported an amazing turn-around—her story can be found in Appendix E.

LISTENING VISITS

Using the Appreciative Inquiry approach, CRWRC staff (trained at the first conference) visited nearly all CRWRC partner organizations in the period following the first conference and prior to the second conference. (Since only one region has held its second conference as of the writing of this evaluation, some of the listening visits are continuing, with completion expected by June.)

The regional managers and, for the most part, individual CRWRC staffmembers have provided exceptionally complete documentation of these visits. As of this date, reports of visits to forty-one partners have been submitted. In one case in West Africa (Niger), the visit has been completed but the documentation has not yet been received. As with Conference I, Latin/Central America is problematic. Despite repeated efforts by the regional manager, reports have not been submitted except for those (two) in which he participated; therefore he is unable to assess the progress in his region towards gathering partner perspectives on the OCI, capacity building, sustainability, etc. (See recommendations section.)

Since this activity highlights the input of CRWRC's partners, their evaluations of the value and potential of the AI approach and of the project in general were carefully collected throughout the listening visits. Below are some of the partner comments.

"I wish we had heard about this long ago." (Doc. 7)

"A.I. is a very peaceful way of problem solving; greater freedom exists to participate and contribute because we focus on the positive. [...] This gave us a better vision for the future; this must now be built upon with more trainings like this." (Doc. 18)

[In a report from a regional manager] "We ... hear partners telling us the process in good for planning, is peaceful, is healing." (Doc. 19)

"This workshop has been very, very helpful and once again I learned that there is always more to learn." (Doc. 22)

"I learned that there exist concepts, values, practices, unique aspects and hopes which open doors to us and allow us to better plan for the future." (Doc. 22)

"I noted the great capacity of ideas which help to overcome obstacles and promote concrete

action." (Doc. 22)

"I learned that it is possible to look at the successes and build the future based on these; it's not necessary to always look at problems." (Doc. 22)

"I felt good during this excellent workshop; it was good for each one of the organizations present, as well as the leadership." (Doc. 23)

"Very exciting." (Doc. 23)

For some partners, the visit itself provided a capacity-building opportunity—this was as relatively "simple" as gathering both board and staff members (and various levels of the latter) in order to discuss the future of the organization in an appreciative mode. This was a first for a significant number of partner groups and comments were numerous about the benefits of this dialogue *within* the organization, as well as with CRWRC.

Some partner groups were so impressed by the potential of the appreciative inquiry approach to organizational capacity building that they are already using it or making plans to use it within their own organization—building their capacity even as the project is still underway. In one Asian country, a partner group is considering using "an AI approach [...] to improve relationships which in the past year have been frayed, [...] amongst board members and staff." (Doc. 16) In West Africa, one partner group has been so pleased with the new approach to partner relationships that it has decided to share in some of the costs of sending its representative to the next conference, as a gesture of support.

And the capacity building is not limited to the partners' internal relationships. CRWRC staffmembers report that the listening visits and the dialogues they contained renewed and nurtured relationships of CRWRC and its partners. By *asking* partners about themselves and framing the questions *positively*, the relationship became much more transparent, healthier, hopeful, and empowering. As Case Western consultant/trainer Craig Wishart noted, "There was been a radical relationship shift for the better between CRWRC and its partners." (Doc. 14) In several cases staff report that a difficult partner relationship was improved during a listening visit because of the different dynamics that AI made possible.

"Participants left workshops with less of a heavy heart re their respective relationships with CRWRC. Them talking and us listening worked like magic!" (Doc. 10)

"Our relationship will become stronger, and we'll be able to learn together." (Doc. 7)

"CRWRC's commitment to look at capacity building in a totally participatory way, in fact in a way that takes our partners with utmost seriousness, was a welcome message indeed." (Doc. 9)

CONFERENCE II

The second round of regional conferences will gather together CRWRC expatriate and national staff *and representatives of partner groups*. This will be the context in which the partners will begin to work with each other and with CRWRC on retooling the organizational capacity indicators. (This re-tooling may take any number of forms, ranging from revision of a scale used in a category to creation of entirely new indicators or the discard of some existing ones.)

Two of these conferences were to have already taken place by this date, but one had to be postponed—the planned site of the West Africa regional conference was Niger, but a coup made that impossible; and instability in several other countries in the region made it unwise to encourage travel by staff to any other site. That conference will now take place in mid-May, immediately following the East Africa second conference. The Asia region will hold its conference in July. A copy of the proposed agenda and list of goals and objectives for the West Africa conference is included as Appendix H, as information.

The Latin/Central America region held its second conference March 26-28. This conference was moderately successful; the difficulties noted earlier regarding the first conference and the listening tours (organizational stresses due to cutbacks, less training time) and an overly ambitious timetable were detrimental to the goal of identifying tentative indicators so that they could be field-tested over the coming months. Each country group, made up of representatives of the various partner groups within that country, *were* able to make a start on the development of some indicators and left the conference committed to continue the process once they returned home. However, the advantage of the interaction among the various country groups as they shared ideas and compared possible indicators is now absent, and it will be up to the various CRWRC country staff and the regional manager to keep the process going and to facilitate inter-country communication for continued mutual learning.

The Latin/Central America region is unique in both the contextual (i.e., organizational) difficulties it is facing and in the length of time set aside for the conference (the other conferences will each be four days in length rather than three), so it is unlikely that the problems encountered there will be present in any of the other three regions as the second round of conferences continues.

EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

FIELD IMPLEMENTATION AND INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

The conferences and listening visits are generally referred to as "field implementation," while activities related to project management, academic-style research into development issues, and the preparation of documents based on the field activities are called "institutional strengthening activities." In most instances, this is a useful distinction, but in the case of this project, the lines have become blurred in one very important matter— *CRWRC's own increased organizational*

capacity (or 'institutional strength') as it has learned from its partners and applied appreciative inquiry to itself. As the Asia regional manager noted, "We are in a process of mutual learning and discovery with our partners. We have learned in the past, and we want to learn more and better with our partners and from them." (Doc. 7) This section will set forth some of those learnings and applications, before examining the institutional strengthening activities which were planned as part of the project.

Some Learnings from the Field and their Applications within CRWRC

- Partners' values: "It is good to hear these stories from our long time partners. They are encouraging and provide learning experiences for us to see what is valued by these [...] organizations." (Doc. 2)
- Long- and short-range planning, including budgeting: For example, from West Africa's regional director: "The process has lead very naturally into visioning in most of the groups (CRWRC and partners). From these visions it is easier to develop long and short range plans along with action plans. Budget planning then becomes part of planning resources to meet the vision, rather than planning of activities from the budget. Of course, looking at financial and human resources is one of the ways of keeping visions realistic, but I think beginning with the visioning helps a lot more creativity to occur." (Doc. 1)
- More "user-friendly" language: Also from West Africa, the Regional Director writes, "I just did a program audit in Nigeria and was struck by how staff had already put phraseology into what was meaningful in communities before transforming it into "CRWRC lingo" for reporting." (She adds that "if we can narrow the instances where this ['translation'] needs to be done, we have indeed accomplished something of value.") (Doc. 1)
- Evaluations: in East Africa, the regional director reports that 18-month program audits of partner organizations are done in collaboration with other partners, to increase mutual learning. (Doc. 10) The Asia OCI regional manager writes: "There is additional impact in terms of using [the AI approach] in our performance evaluations and organizational audits. This has been very beneficial to CRWRC." (Doc. 16)
- Blending AI with other analysis techniques: "Conference participants were enthused about borrowing from other methodologies such as 'Participatory Rural Appraisal' in carrying out exercises in 'organizational mapping' and 'organizational trend-setting.' The potential is there for the visual and participatory aspects of PRA to carry over into AI as well as to sharpen our learnings and make the process more enjoyable." (Doc. 3)
- Re-thinking its use of measurement: A mathematician from Calvin College (Grand Rapids, Michigan) has been working with the OCI project team (regional managers and directors, etc.) on better understanding and use of numbers. While it is too early to have any decisions on how numbers can/will be used in CRWRC's revised system for

monitoring of capacity, the issue has raised some questions that have challenged CRWRC thinking. In Asia, for example, staff noted that "we can stop doing "inappropriate" things with the numbers. [...] We can focus on trends, rather than actual number scores. We can generate stories of positive experiences with increased capacity, and then experiment with extracting (abstracting) some evaluative scores." (Doc. 19)

- Revision of evaluation forms: Regional Directors and the International Program Director revised CRWRC's program audit and performance appraisal forms, to cast them in more appreciative language. As the West Africa regional director noted recently, these are major changes for the organization and are the result of the OCI grant process. (Doc. 1)

Regional Managers/Regional Directors meeting, February 1996

CRWRC's organizational learning was increased noticeably at the meeting in February 1996 of regional managers, regional directors, and other staff involved in the project. This meeting provided a forum for sharing of learnings, discussion of issues, and planning for future activities. A second such meeting will take place in August 1996.

Stakeholders' Gathering, ("CRWRC Assembly of Worldwide Partners") August 1996

Although it is not directly tied to the anticipated revision of CRWRC's organizational capacity indicators, a major outgrowth of the collaboration with Case Western Reserve University (both on the OCI project and as a participant in CWRU's G.E.M. program) is the plan to hold a "stakeholders' meeting" August 18-21. Having learned the value of listening to partners and doing so in an appreciative manner, CRWRC's directors and board have approved a meeting of CRWRC international staff (both expatriate and national), North American-based staff (both headquarters and field), board members, donors, representatives of partner organization (both foreign and domestic), and program beneficiaries.

Although it is impossible to forecast the results of this CRWRC gathering, the impetus for it can be credited to the enthusiasm and learning experienced in the OCI grant activities that have taken place thus far.

GRANT-SPECIFIED INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES

While CRWRC's progress in applying field-originated learnings to itself has largely been an unanticipated benefit of the grant-related activities, the agreement between CRWRC and USAID specified four main components in its institutional strengthening portion :

- training of CRWRC staff to use an appreciative inquiry approach;
- research into organizational capacity building and sustainability;
- the development of a manual usable by other PVOs interested in adapting CRWRC's experience and adapting it for use in their own organization; and
- training of an in-house evaluator.

Staff training in philosophy and use of appreciative inquiry

This training took place at the various regional conferences described in the "field implementation" section above. A total of 69 CRWRC staff, both expatriate and national, were trained by Case Western consultant Jim Ludema, with backstopping from consultant Craig Wishart. As Dr. Ludema noted (Doc. 13), the workshops exceeded his expectations in terms of staff understanding and enthusiasm.

An unexpected benefit in terms of training took place during the listening visits by CRWRC staff to the various partner organizations with which they work. They made an introduction to appreciative inquiry a part of the visit in order to help the partner understand the purposes of the project and the visit itself. These sessions became "trainings" and the enthusiasm generated by both the learning and the application of appreciative inquiry to the partnership relationship with CRWRC, as noted earlier, has led to applications being made of appreciative inquiry within the partner organizations themselves and in their relationships with the communities in which they work. A table of figures for the numbers of non-CRWRC persons participating in these appreciative inquiry trainings is attached as Appendix D. The totals for Asia and East and West Africa regions are at this time 673 persons (405 men and 268 women). Figures for Latin/Central America are unavailable due to the lack of reporting, and a few listening visits remain to be completed. **It is likely that the total number of partner organization trainees (both staff and board members) will be in the 700-750 range.**

Research into Capacity-building and Sustainability

The "action research" (a phrase used by CWRU consultants to describe research that is happening on the field, via interaction, rather than in academic settings and via printed materials) connected with this project is, of course, on-going. It is the second and third rounds of conferences that will deal with these topics and attempt to arrive at consensus among various partners and CRWRC staff.

Some preliminary findings from this "action research" are found in Appendix C. However, it must be emphasized that these are only *preliminary*. As one regional manager said in his report, "There is a striking lack of analysis in this report. The partner organization participants at the next [2nd] OCI conference should get an "equal crack" (not second crack) at determining the indicators, ingredients, factors, forces and features of organizational capacity within their context." (Doc. 11)

Some "academic" research has taken place, as well. An annotated bibliography has been developed.

And intentions regarding research into typologies of development organizations and assessment of CRWRC's place on the "spectrum" of capacity-building PVOs have not been acted upon. It is likely that much knowledge on this topic exists informally, due to staffpersons own reading and interactions with colleagues from other development PVOs, but nothing has been committed to paper in an organized fashion in connection with this project.

Development of Manual

This aspect of the project is moving along extremely well. The editor has been named and has been working closely with the two Case Western consultant/trainers to determine content. The table of contents has been drafted and a number of source documents and potential authors of content pieces have been identified. Over the next three months, the editor and one of the Case Western trainer/consultants will travel extensively in CRWRC's East and West Africa regions to collect additional materials directly from staff and partners. A first draft is expected by early fall (with some chapters in draft form by early summer), although the continuing research (both 'action' and academic) can be incorporated only as it is completed. The manual is approximately *six months ahead of schedule* at this point! CRWRC is also contacting several publishing houses that specialize in development materials to assess interest in the manual. If a publisher can be found, the "reach" of the manual could extend much farther than originally anticipated, to include an international NGO/PVO audience. The proposed outline for the manual is found in Appendix G.

Training of in-house evaluator

As noted in the annual report, this training has been mostly self-directed. The Case Western faculty member who was to act as training mentor proved to have a different concept of the mentoring relationship than the trainee, and her efforts to become involved in the Case Western G.E.M. project evaluation team (as a kind of "field experience") have not been successful. Under the direction of CRWRC's Director of Planning and Evaluation, the evaluator trainee has read extensively, and she has attended a number of conferences and workshops having to do with evaluation. Intentions regarding formal academic training in data gathering and other more technical evaluation issues have been unfulfilled to this point, owing to a travel schedule that makes formal study (at a college or university) impractical. Opportunities for such study will continue to be explored.

OTHER ISSUES

COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION

In the annual report, it was noted that the complexity of the project (involving staff all over the world, various home office staff, and outside consultants) had led to some unanticipated issues and questions about lines of communication, responsibilities, etc. As the project proceeds, CRWRC is becoming more adept at dealing with these issues, although problems still occur from time to time, affecting staff morale and consequently their ability to fully participate in and support the project. It is probably impractical to expect otherwise in a project such as this, and there has been no evidence of any significant harm to the project due to communication/coordination difficulties, but CRWRC should continue to pay close attention to this issue.

"The Appreciative Inquirer" - A CRWRC home office staff member has come up with an innovative means of improving communication among the various 'players' in the project: he has begun a newsletter (entitled "The Appreciative Inquirer") to keep staff updated on significant developments, activity schedules, etc. Samples are included as Appendix F.

FINANCES

Tight budgets have been an issue throughout the project. Some of this is due to changing expectations: the original budget was built around the participation of a representative sample of partner groups/organizations at the various conferences. As the process has unfolded, the inclusion of ALL partners has come to be viewed as desirable, but funds are not available to do this. (CRWRC does not have any excess income at present, and additional funding for conferences would therefore require cutbacks in development programs, a choice that CRWRC is not willing to make.) Unused consultant funds from last year is allowing increased participation in second-round conferences, but similarly expanded participation in third conference will require additional funds and the availability of any unspent consultant funds is unlikely, according to Case Western sources.

Also, as the process developed, the role of the regional managers became increasingly that of a regional consultant on the application of appreciative inquiry to the interviewing process being done with partners, but the budget did not allow for the regional managers' participation in many of the visits. Such participation would have allowed the regional managers to have first-hand knowledge of the results of the visits, thereby strengthening their role as regional experts and "backstoppers" to other staff.

No funds were budgeted for pre-conference planning, and this has meant that consultations of planners had to be done via e-mail, fax, etc., rather than the optimum face-to-face meeting; this has in some instances been detrimental to the process.

These funding shortages are understandable, given the financial squeeze that development organizations (including USAID) are experiencing. And the lack of foresight concerning these additional expenses is not surprising, since CRWRC had never before taken on this kind of broad-based research-oriented project. It has learned much about the need for attention to 'minor' items such as pre-conference planning sessions and field consultations.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the three questions posed earlier—

1. What has been accomplished and was it done in a timely manner?
2. What remains to be done and what is the likelihood that it will be accomplished

according to the established (Gantt) timetable?

3. What changes should be made in the project plans, if any, as the result of the responses to questions 1 and 2?

—we will respond to each as it relates to the two major categories of the project (field implementation and institutional strengthening).

FIELD IMPLEMENTATION

All regions have held their planned activities as scheduled or nearly so (political unrest forcing a change in one region), and the results have fulfilled the objectives set out in the matching grant program description for at least three of the four regions. While the Latin/Central America region did hold its first conference as planned, it is impossible to judge the degree to which the region was able to assess its partnership relationships, its' partners' capacities, etc., due to the lack of reporting.

The listening visits provided an unanticipated benefit—introduction of partner organization staff and board members to the philosophy of appreciative inquiry and training in related techniques. It is likely that this unexpected bonus will have a longlasting positive effect on both the project itself and the life of the organizations involved.

There is no indication at this time that the remaining series of conferences overseas and the final NGO/PVO conference in North America will not be held as planned.

Adjustments to Gantt chart: Three minor changes should be made to the Gantt chart regarding field implementation:

- the time frame for the second series of regional conferences for all four regions is March-July. This represents a change in the Asia date, but also, the Gantt chart now makes it appear that each regional conference will last 3-4 months (!).
- the annual report to USAID was inadvertently omitted in years 2 and 3. It is normally due in August. The appropriate addition should be made for the current (95/96) FY. However, it would seem advisable that the final report not be due in August 1997, given the need for a final report within a few months following. CRWRC and the USAID project officer should consult on this.
- since staff and partner training is now completed, the line concerning the submission of training reports should be dropped from the remainder of the chart.

Although the logframe is not specifically referred to in the evaluation questions, it should be noted as well that the project logframe refers to improved community capacity indicators (CCI) as well as OCIs. While some community-level work has been done by partner organizations, the task of revising the OCIs is a large task and should remain the primary focus of the current project. It would be advisable that the references to CCI revisions be dropped, while at the same time recognizing that some progress will be made in this area as an off-shoot of the OCI-focused work. Attempting to do both would seriously dilute the OCI efforts.

Recommendations regarding field implementation

- That corrective action be taken in the Latin/Central America region to ensure that future reporting is done in a timely manner, that missing reports are filed, and that efforts are made to motivate staff there to participate more fully and cooperatively within the region and with the other regions and the home office.
- That additional financial resources be sought to enable expanded participation of partner organizations in the remaining conferences and to allow for increased involvement of regional managers in pre-conference and field consultations.

INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

CRWRC has already learned much through the various activities, and showed commendable initiative in adding the preliminary conference at the beginning. This helped get the institutional strengthening component off to a good start.

Likewise, the training component and the development of the manual are outstanding and either on schedule or ahead of schedule. The training of the in-house evaluator did not develop as planned, but appropriate substitutes have been found.

The weakness in the institutional strengthening aspect of the project is in the research area. While the "action research" taking place on the field has been productive and offers excellent potential for new knowledge, the academic side of the research has not been done. Some attention has been given to developing some typologies of capacity, but the identification of work done by other organizations and the question of CRWRC's place on the spectrum related to organizational capacity development have been neglected. This needs more attention over the remaining time of the project.

The bibliography is good as far as it goes, but could profit from updating as new print resources appear. While the Gantt chart indicates only that a bibliography should be prepared and circulated, it would seem advisable that this document receive periodic updating to keep it as current as possible.

Adjustments to Gantt chart:

- Since the manual production is well ahead of schedule, much of the detail given is no longer necessary or correct. It could be replaced by a single line "manual production" for the remaining 18 months of the grant period, for the sake of simplicity.
- Since formal research has been neglected, it seems advisable to add it to the Gantt chart as a reminder and add at least one or two checkpoints to assess progress.

Recommendation regarding institutional strengthening

- that a person be assigned to supervise the academic research elements of the project, to insure that it is done and that its findings are made known within CRWRC and in the wider NGO/PVO community via appropriate inclusions in the projected manual.

An additional recommendation (re scheduling)

- In discussions with the USAID project advisor, it has been proposed that the final evaluation take place in April 1997, with a report available to USAID by late June, in order that CRWRC could be considered for a follow-on grant to take up the desired revision of the CCI. That schedule change is recommended.

In conclusion, . . .

at its mid-point, the project is on the whole headed in the right direction, with only a few changes needed to keep it on course; the prospects for accomplishing its purpose of producing an improved method of assessing partnerships are excellent.

Appendices

Appendix A

Source materials cited

1. E-mail correspondence, B. Abma, West Africa Regional Director
2. Report by D. De Vries, Philippines
3. Asia Summary Report
4. Progress Report, Asia (2/10/96)
5. Full report, Asia Conference #1
6. Thematic Analysis of the CRWRC Global Conferences (CWRU)
7. Transcription, India listening tour
8. Memorandum, J. Ludema (8/29/95)
9. Summary report, India listening visit
10. Full report, East Africa Conference #1
11. East Africa summary report, listening visits
12. E-mail correspondence, C. Geisterfer, Latin/Central American Regional Manager
13. Interview notes, meeting with J. Ludema (April 1996)
14. Interview notes, meeting with C. Wishart (April 1996)
15. Report of Ukura (Uganda) Archdeaconry planning workshop (May 1995)
16. Faxed remarks, W. Postma, Asia Regional Manager
17. Conference II planning documents, West Africa region
18. Listening visit report, Madi-West Nile Diocese, CRS (Uganda)
19. Asia Regional Conference report, Feb.-March 1996
20. Participant comments, Latin/Central America Conference #2
21. Latin/Central America Conference #1 full report
22. Listening visit report, Diaconia (Honduras)
23. Listening visit report, FEINE (Ecuador)

Appendix B

Documents consulted

REGION

- East Africa

- Conference I

- Complete Report
 - Summary Report
 - Training Report

- Listening Tours

- Kenya
 - Ambassadors Development Agency
 - Daraja Trust
 - Reformed Church of East Africa
 - Christian Community Services - Nambale Diocese CPK (Church Province of Kenya)
 - Malawi
 - CCAP Relief and Development (Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Nkhoma Synod)
 - Tanzania
 - ELVD - Mwanza (East Lake Victoria Diocese of the Lutheran Church in Tanzania)
 - HIMWA (Gospel Mission and Development to Rural Pastoralists in Tanzania)
 - Uganda
 - Uganda Protestant Medical Bureau
 - Christian Community Services
 - Christian Outreach Ministry and Education (COME)
 - Christian Charity Centre Uganda (CCCU)
 - Christian Rural Service - Church of Uganda - Madi-West Nile Diocese
 - Vision Terudo
 - Kuluva PHC (Primary Health Care)
 - Ukuru Archdeaconry Planning and Development Committee
 - Zambia
 - Reformed Church in Zambia - Eastern Province (RCZ-E)
 - Western Province (RCZ-W)
 - Summary

- West Africa

- Conference I

- Complete Report
 - Summary Report

- Training Report

Listening Tours

- Mali
 - Association Protestante de la Santé au Mali (APSM)
 - Bureau de Développement et d'Assistance Sociale (BADS)/AGEMPEM (Association of Protestant Churches Missions)
 - Commission de Secours Chrétien (CSC)
- Nigeria
 - CRUDAN (Christian Rural Development Association in Nigeria)
 - EYN-RDP (Church of the Brethren - Rural Development Program)
 - CRCN-RD (Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria - Rural Development)
 - SUM-CRC Urban Ministry
 - RURCON (Rural Development Counsellors for Christian Churches in Africa)
- Sierra Leone
 - Christian Extension Services Kuranko Project (CES)
- Senegal
 - CRWRC/Arid Lands-Senegal
 - FDEA (Femmes/Développement/Enterprise en Afrique -- Women/Development/Enterprise in Africa)
- Summary

- **Asia**

Conference I

- Complete Report
- Summary Report
- Training Report

Listening Tours

- Philippines
 - Sagip-Kapwa, Zambales
 - Classis Metro Manila Deacons
 - Classis Southern Luzon Deacons
 - Kabalaka Panay Inc.
 - Pangasinan Christian Service Group
 - Bangladesh/India
 - BEES (Bangladesh Extension Education Services)
 - SWOSHIKA*
 - SUPOTH*
 - PROTTASHA*
 - SATHI*
- (*these acronyms are derived from Bangla)
- CDP (Community Development Project)

- CTVT (Council for Technical & Vocational Training - India)
- AARDIP (Adoni Area Rural Development Initiatives Project - India)

- Summary

- **Latin America**

- Conference I

- Complete Report
 - Summary Report
 - Training Report

- Listening Tours

- Ecuador
 - FEINE (Evangelical Indian Association)
 - Honduras
 - Diaconia

Appendix C

Some Learnings from Listening Tours and Conferences

From a Regional Manager's listening tour report:

The Learning and benefits for CRWRC have been gathered from the staff in the region and then summarized as follows:

1. Board Members and Staff immensely enjoyed responding to the 4th Protocol Question regarding unique cultural aspects. The intensity of their responses raises the issue for me of - being more intentional about promoting the "building in" or the "taking into account" of cultural "life giving" factors and forces.

2. Full Participation: There just is no substitute for full participation & good process - getting the Board and staff together "in one room" promoted, enhanced and facilitated participation and process; I repeatedly heard sentiments expressed about the need to "do this" regularly in the future. Both board members and staff felt genuinely "heard" in many cases in addition to acknowledging increased appreciation for and understanding of each other.

3. There are at least 6 items that development practitioners should always remember 1.) training, 2.) training, 3.) training, 4.) relationships, 5.) relationships and 6.) relationships. The ability to form, nurture and sustain relationships at the personal and corporate level is valued by our partners - it seems to be a factor or ingredient of capacity.

4. A.I. is a great way to get into Long Range Planning in addition to promoting constructive evaluations.

5. Bringing people together "in one room" did a lot to build commitment to each other as well as commitment to the organization and to programs.

6. The A. I. Approach: Everyone seemed to enjoy it due to it being non-threatening, participatory and positive. In the LTs I facilitated, it seemed that lots of things "got said" and dealt with positively without the bruising confrontational dynamics.

7. Sustainability and financial self sufficiency are stiff challenges for partners; total reliance on donor support - even consortium funding - without successful, local capital formation taking place - has high risks.

8. A big piece of Organizational Capacity seems to be "commitment" at the board and staff level. There seems to be healthy levels of commitment among the staff of the partner organizations; the board members level of commitment needs more study and attention, i.e., how is it built, promoted and facilitated etc.?

9. Stepping back and taking an appreciative approach often yields solutions where before none seemed to exist.

10. When setting organizational plans seems arduous and unfamiliar, it helps people to think about what good has happened so that they can have concrete ideas about what can happen.

11. It frees people from the "risks" of being creative and makes creativity a concrete asset.

12. The LTs highlighted the value people place on cooperation, unity - on relationships.

13. The LTs build relationships among staff, board and committee members.

14. It assisted me in getting a hand on the organizational mind.

15. Conceptualizing a preferred future - personal and/or organizational - was a new experience for many - perhaps most.

16. It was an enjoyable experience for most people at the committee/board level - an intense orientation to staff and programs .

17. A.I. allows you to "move on" - to move beyond the problems to the opportunities.

Other remarks relative to re capacity-building and partnership

Some possible early learnings about "capacity"...I think that this training session suggests that genuine mutuality between CRWRC and partner organizations is highly valued and is the basis for a strong relationship. Personal relationships are key; it was heartening to see the degree to which partners seem to value CRWRC's systems for planning and reporting--and the importance attached to a mutual process of learning! Being solidly and predictably funded is also crucial. Networking is very important. The passion of partner leadership is a crucial element...they embody a passion for the poor and this is a driving force and salient capacity in organizations. (Memo from Asia Regional Director)

"Ideal partnership"

-Mutual trust and respect. Suggestions from either side should be taken as well-meant and in the best interests of the program.

-Equality. Funders normally try to control.

-Freedom in decision-making. As we engage in implementation and meet up with situations and changes "on the ground," decisions can only be made by implementing or facilitating organizations. So funding organizations must respect this and give freedom in decision making.

-Role clarity. Funders and implementers need clear boundaries, clearly understood by both.

- Congruence of priorities. A match is necessary for a good relationship.
 - Transparency (mutual): This is closely related to congruence of priorities; there can be no hidden agendas. Both partners should be equally obligated to be transparent with each other.
 - Convergence of ideologies. Again, a match is necessary between values and philosophies of the partners.
 - Direct partnership relationship. Related to role clarity--when other parties are introduced into the relationship, or competing jurisdictions come into play, or overlapping functions are introduced, partnerships are weakened.
 - Effective information-sharing and access to information. This is very much related to transparency; it is about equal access to all the relevant data, about disclosure.
 - Longterm relationship. This creates the environment in which learning can be maximized, relationships can deepen, a history of trust develops. [...] It should not be a honeymoon relationship; it should be a marriage.
- (from transcription of India listening tour report)

Capacity is much more than mere possession of skills. Often those [partner] organizations with the greatest capacity do not possess the skills but possess the spirit, enthusiasm, and hope for change.

(from transcription of East Africa conference I)

See also **Thematic Analysis of the CRWRC Global Conferences** on the following pages, formulated by Case Western consultant/trainer Craig Wishart following the four regional CRWRC conferences.

Thematic Analysis of the CRWRC Global Conferences

We have just completed the first round of conferences in all the regions and can unequivocally say that we are impressed by the quality and integrity of everyone with CRWRC. The conferences were a wonderful success. Each region had its own flavor, yet across the board these folks contributed a sense of life and vitality to our efforts. Their commitment to the organization and desire to improve the OCI as the guiding beacon of their work has demonstrated their capacity to openly and honestly challenge their prevailing assumptions and seek innovative approaches to their development efforts.

We would like to suggest a few of the themes we see emerging from this first round of conferences.

1. Around the world CRWRC staff are committed to the organization/community capacity building strategy, they place a high value on monitoring progress and ensuring mutual accountability in the capacity building process, and they believe that CRWRC's OCI system is generally a good tool for promoting such monitoring and accountability. They report that most partner organizations feel the same way.

As was stated in Latin America, "The heart and soul of CRWRC is its wholistic ministry with organizations committed to measurable results." Throughout the regions, it was reported that one of CRWRC's best practices was the focus on accountability. Unlike other Christian organizations that are often unwilling to address the bottom line of "results," CRWRC believes it is imperative that a system of accountability be retained in this review of the OCI. The OCI is in service of this purpose and acts as a continuous improvement system that is based on monitoring, evaluation, feedback, and accountability.

This accountability requires ongoing feedback of the results of their work. They asserted the priority of communication as the key to their success and strength. The hope for improvement centered around further opening the lines of communication with the home office, the differing regional offices and their partner organizations, through which everyone would benefit from the "cross fertilization" of ideas and practices. Some suggested ideas included (1) a book, updated annually or semi-annually, that is a compilation of written summaries of the activities in each field; (2) the field staff regularly visit other fields, such as during the annual reviews of other regions partner organizations; (3) assign a home office liaison to find resources and transfer of information between fields.

Importantly, they expressed that the communication between the field staff and partners should model the communication between the home office and the field. In other words, the relationship between the home office and the field should act as a role model for participatory decision making with their partner organizations, by encouraging and facilitating communication and networking between field offices.

This kind of relationship, they believe, celebrates the value of people and the interdependence of their partnerships.

For many, the OCI represents the CRWRC's unrelenting quest for learning and improvement in all areas. It acts as a grounding source of their integrity in striving for what is good, and searching for ways to best empower, develop, and enable the poorest of the poor.

Karl Westerhof's story of his work with CTVT in India captured the value and purpose of CRWRC's unique approach to development. CTVT was an agency contracted by Christian Missions, who quickly abandoned the area. The agency continued to receive "blind" funding for its programs until it was finally confronted by CRWRC for its deceptive practices and was closed down. Later, after CTVT was reopened, Karl was asked to monitor their projects and conduct evaluations. Karl was relentlessly encouraging, affirming what ever minor improvements he saw. He was persistent in his demands for their accountability; a "burr" in their saddle, as no other funding organization had made such demands upon them for accountability for funding. He learned that it was difficult to get ownership of the OCI, CCI. Over the ten years, he struggled to find other modes of communicating ideas and concepts that would overcome the linguistic, cultural, and communication barriers. At first CTVT perceived the OCI simply as a hoop through which they could get money from CRWRC, but once they worked to make the system contextually and culturally relevant to them, they now see it as beneficial to their work and organization. They have interpreted it into their own language, and tailored the OCI to reflect indicators that attend to the functioning of the specific activities of their projects. And now the AARDIP project, a CRWRC influenced program, has been praised by outside evaluators, and has been documented as their best program. The success of this program served to dismantle the deep cultural prejudice that no form of sustainable organization could be created with the low caste.

2. There is a desire to make the OCI system more relational/dialogical/participatory, so that the categories, plans for improvement, etc. are negotiated with partners not simply done and owned by CRWRC staff.

As was asked in Asia, "How do you build community while retaining the rigorous system of accountability that keeps us driving forward?" It was suggested that they need to be more open, flexible and transparent in their relationships with the partner groups - collaborating in a participatory process of mutual learning and building capacity. As Dr. Kinyanjui said in East Africa, development is transformation. Transformation is a relational construct. It seeks to change the conditions of our relationships through the building of people. Therefore most importantly, transformation requires participation. We must believe in people; without their involvement, these efforts will be in vain.

In fact, it is the foundation of care and respect demonstrated in all relationships that they value most about their work and CRWRC as a whole. It is this appreciation that is believed to be a key to their success and core factor of CRWRC's vitality. The hope for heightening vitality lies in concentrating upon greater collaboration with the partner groups. The appreciative inquiry process was suggested to be a valuable model, which affirms that all people should be in the process of transformation, and argues that it is quality of these relationships that give life to their organizations, not necessarily the skills they possess.

Capacity as it is being currently measured is thought to be reflective of the western conceptions of organizations. They suggested that they should ask the partners what organizational capacity means for them, while concurrently sharing with the partners their ideas. They believe that in collaboration they may create tailored measurements of capacity that reflect their cultural norms and traditions. Importantly, capacity was concluded to be much more than mere possession of skills. Those organizations with the greatest capacity possess the spirit, enthusiasm, and hope for change.

Ideally, the OCI system should affirm what the group or organization already has and builds upon it. The ideal system must allow enough flexibility for contextual relevance, innovation, and novelty, but also have enough specificity to affirm that CRWRC does know some things that do help to support and promote sustainable organizations. It should be a process that affirms some basic ingredients, that which is already known, and then builds in the flexibility, innovation, and fluidity to take in the various dimensions of any particular context.

They talked about what they had already been doing to make the OCI more participatory, dialogical, event based, affirming, and humanized. They agreed that the "process" was the most important factor in the value of the OCI. The meaning of the numbers has been rooted in the quality of the process of relationship building, knowledge creation and collective construction of the "truth." The process is a question of uncovering what is the truth, what is real in these contexts. And the "truth" can only be defined in the dialogical discussion with the groups. In this interaction, they have been able to collaboratively set the stage for their partnership, redefine the ground for activities together, and enhance their commitments and accountability with each other.

In Asia, Kohima Daring shared a story about Swosika's experience with the OCI that exemplified the value of a participatory process. Initially Swosika responded negatively to this "imposed" policy of evaluation. The whole process was perceived as distancing and secretive, until Nancy had the OCI forms translated into Bangla and involved the group leaders and members in collaborative discussion about the meaning and significance of these measures. In time, they came to value the OCI when they understood it in more concrete terms that had meaning for them. They envisioned the OCI as a health monitoring program, much like the child weighing process, that helps them to maintain awareness of progress, growth, and

development. Their concept of weighing was a useful metaphor because it was integrated into much of the organization's culture. It suggested to them that they should not focus on the details of their organization's "nutrition" or "malnutrition," but simply focus on this measure as an indication of growth and development. It permitted them the sense of freedom and flexibility they needed to reach a particular objective without getting caught up and bogged down in the rules and procedures. It allowed them to focus on growth monitoring and promotion without getting bogged down in whether the organization is malnourished or well nourished. They could remain focused on the positive objective of their continuous growth. And, from this information, they could then can set goals for the next six months.

For Swosika, the whole idea of capacity building has become a highly collaborative, participatory process of brain storming and negotiation about the meaning and purpose of the OCI. The history of the program's ownership of the OCI addressed three questions; (1) who's doing it? (2) what language is it in? and (3), what categories should be measured? Swosika use of the OCI models the gradual evolution towards ownership of the OCI system. At first it was just used at the organization's central office, then the program managers got on board with it, then field staff began to use it, and finally the local groups began using it themselves. There was also an evolution in terms of the language of the OCI forms. First they were translated into a high level Bengali, then to a local level Bengali, and finally local groups created their own forms with their own language. There was also a similar evolution in terms of the categories that were used. Beginning with CRWRC's five standard categories, the OCI evolved into a set of categories that were relevant to the local context (which included the five CRWRC originals, but went beyond them). The OCI became increasingly relevant to and reflective of the community context and experience of the people.

East Africa summarized the ideals of this open relationship in their statement of:
Partner Relationship Proposition:

"CRWRC and partners are celebrating our similarities and differences. We are understanding of each others values; we are respecting and valuing each other's cultures; we are appreciating the differences and therefore are learning from each other. We admit our needs and contract with each other to help each other grow. We both give and take, and share with each other much of value. We deliberately solicit and rely on our partners' input. We assist our partners to serve in other parts of the world. We compliment each other. "

3. There is a desire to allow room to make the OCI more contextual, to root it in the local socio-cultural subsoil of a particular region/organization/community. There is a sense that CRWRC needs to be more intentional and become more adept at starting with local wisdom and building from there.

As Dr. Kinyanjui stated, development in Africa requires that the elements of the indigenous culture and traditions be embraced in the processes and foundations of

change. The innovations of social change need to be rooted in the indigenous knowledge, rooted in the African soil where they can mature and flourish. Otherwise, these innovations will effect only temporary or inappropriate change that does not answer the needs according to the values of the people. Because these change efforts are not anchored in the rich traditions and cultural assumptions of the African people, they are simply swept away with the changing tradewinds of time and social/political contingencies.

The community, he believes, is the basis of transformation and sustainable development. Much effort has been directed towards denying, controlling, or manipulating the community, instead of believing in the community and allowing it to flower. All steps towards natural organization, self-development and empowerment of the community has been repressed, banned - seen as a threat to the political party. Over the years, the strength of the living community has been stifled by the ideology of one particular party or another. When permitted to organize, the community has been a tremendous source strength, change and development.

Moises Colop's story of the accounting system of the Kekchi communities beautifully captured the sentiment of the need to be intentional in listening and learning from the local wisdom. During one of Jim Boldenow's visits, they went to visit a community to ask how they kept track of their finances. The locals responded by gathering five or six members of the community, and along with them they brought black corn, white corn, yellow corn and beans. They sat down around a table and began Mayan style accounting. Moises had no idea what they were doing. At first he didn't understand their accounting system and all that was symbolized by the corn and beans. But he learned that for the numbers 100-999 they used yellow corn, from 1000-10,000 they used white corn, and anything greater than 10,000, they used black corn. For numbers less than 100, they used the beans. He was amazed by the sophistication and comprehension of their system. He learned five things from them that day: (1) not only by numbers can accounting be done; (2) accounting doesn't have to be a solitary process. They did community accounting where everybody could come and watch, a process that was entirely transparent; (3) the accounting system was a good one in that it covered every expense; (4) if he wanted to get accounting information, he had to go to the community to get it. Therefore the process of their accounting system not only built relationships among them, but also built a relationship between him and them. It was not a distant or "arms-length" system; and (5) if he wanted them to give him written accounting, he had to talk it over with them long and hard before he asked for it, because he realized that to do so would be to change their culture.

This picture acts as both an example of identifying capacity in context and a model for the process of implementing the OCI system. In many cases, it was suggested that linguistic and cultural translation of the OCI is a beneficial beginning. The collective and collaborative process of discussion about the measures opens dialogue about relevance and interprets the indicators in meaningful ways. But in this case,

the OCI system itself needed to be flexible enough to honor the local knowledge and local methods. This story demonstrated a fundamental belief in the wisdom of the people and their traditions. Beginning from a position of celebrating the local knowledge, "we are going to the people to see what they already have, to learn from them, to value what is already there and to build on it." Rather than denigrating or discarding the local practices, the OCI needs to tap the strength and power of these indigenous sources of learning. These are the processes or methods through which social transformation and sustained development will be actualized. And, as they said in Asia, "Once you start this 'sharing' of knowledge, it becomes infectious."

4. There is a desire to strengthen CRWRC's own capacity for doing capacity building with partners. As they said in Asia, "we've got a good product (the OCI system), but we need to strengthen our process for using it!" Here's where I think the OCI can be useful.

They expressed their desire to get away from the tension and focus on the limitations of the OCI system, and to begin to work toward creative and innovative solutions. Much of the debate over the value and validity of the numerical measures was viewed as a distraction away from the focus on improving understanding and building capacity with the partner groups. It was suggested that the staff should act as interpreters or mediators to balance the expectations and needs of the partner groups and home office as they work towards a more integrated model. Doug Seebeck encouraged them to hang with the "gracious uncertainty" of this situation, and embrace the opportunity for the mutual learning in this participatory process. From this perspective, "capacity" is permitted to become a living concept, that has the freedom to grow and change through dialogue with their partners.

To date, the OCI has been perceived as a tremendous advance. It was suggested that the OCI took the best of the SRS and enhanced it by paying attention to the variety of factors that were essential to organizational health and vitality. Unlike the SRS, which assessed the skill level of individuals, the OCI focuses on the capacity of an organization to sustain itself, measuring the people, groups and communities progress to self-sufficiency in relation to the external system/environment. The SRS was more concerned with performance and fixing problems (short term results) while the OCI attends to the long term sustainability of activities which enhance growth. In other words, the SRS looked to resolve problems while the OCI seeks to appreciate and support the forces and factors that give life to organizations and communities in the sum total of their environmental surroundings.

<u>SRS</u>		<u>OCI/CCI</u>
skills	->	capacity
individual	->	organization
performance	->	sustainability
fixing	->	growth
problem solving	->	appreciation

The fundamental issue facing CRWRC is its own capacity to operate as a unified, participatory team that shares a compelling vision and effectively empowers its staff to risk and learn together.

As Suresh Srivastva suggested, our history is full of powerful lessons, if we can become unshackled by our bad memories. Building capacity for CRWRC means learning from the best of its history, and building upon it by bringing the future into the present in the form of hopes and dreams. Hope is an important construct in organizational life because it is the primary transformational force of organizing. Organizations as a whole move in the direction of hopes because our actions conform to what we wish for and desire.

The hopes for a renewed sense of community in CRWRC are embodied in three key propositions; team and community building, shared vision, and empowerment:

Team and Community Building Proposition

"CRWRC staff are knitted into a community committed to each other and to the work we do. Information is generated, distilled and shared in such a way that collegiality is enhanced and learnings are used for increased program effectiveness, celebration of achievements, and enhanced relationships. Encouragement, responsiveness, forgiveness, acceptance and intercession sustain and propel this community."

Shared Vision Proposition

"All actors in CRWRC activities share a common vision. By all actors, we mean people across the spectrum of responsibilities, cultures, and locations. The timeless core of this vision compels the actors to be participants in God's redemptive work in all of creation. The concrete expression of this is a kaleidoscope of responses which reflect the diverse and changing realities."

Empowerment Proposition

"(1) We are well-trained empowered national staff. We are involved in the decision-making process in CRWRC in the region. We have jobs that are challenging and we are well-trained for them. We are given opportunities for personal growth, organizational growth and we have a vision for ourselves and our community. We have all the resources we need to do our jobs effectively. We are given learning opportunities to interact with other field staff internationally and intra-nationally.

"(2) We are an empowered partner organization/community. We are a self-reliant group that can identify the needs of our community and meet those needs. We have a vision for the future and we are working toward getting there."

In Asia, they determined that enhancing the sense of community in CRWRC required that they be more purposeful and deliberate in their acts. Accordingly, Karl Westerhof encouraged them to re-examine the fundamental intentions of their work and life together by asking, "How do we organize around forgiveness, celebration, and affirmation? And, what is it that is unique to the Christian organization?" He reflected that though there are secular organization that are driven by similar purpose and good, the unique quality of the Christian organization is its ability to embody forgiveness and love. How then does CRWRC embody these qualities when it is organized in a "techno-rational" mode; "designed to be an efficient well oiled machine that ultimately seeks to run itself"? It was generally suggested that functionally, there is a need to reorganize the way CRWRC has been proceeding to achieve its goals - the process is perceived as too bureaucratized. Elaborate systems for communication have been created, but what people desire is the sense of connectedness they experience in face to face relationships. Community requires continuous and open flow of communication that enables flexibility and engagement with others, a fluid system that brings in the world of the other into our own. They agreed that CRWRC needs to take the time to strengthen the relational fiber of the organization.

In Mexico, John DeHaan championed this commitment to recapturing the community of CRWRC in his announcement that "the future mandates that we eliminate the existing industrial hierarchical model of organizing to bring us closer together in relationship and improve our communication; not remain at arms length, but improve our trust and understanding of each other."

5. The OCI is a tool for both monitoring and for organizational learning and development. There is a desire on the part of CRWRC staff to find ways to tip the balance more in the direction of learning (using the tool for the co-generation of useful knowledge that promotes growth and development) on the learning-monitoring continuum.

This inquiry project into the OCI is itself a relational inquiry. It is a model approach that brings people together across boundaries; institutional, national, regional. It is intended to be a process of transboundary learning.

The inquiry is based upon the assumption that building relationship is the source of building knowledge. In the process of appreciating, of attending to the positive aspects of others and the situation, we open ourselves to move beyond our bounded understanding, to loosen our frames and learn from others and our environment. The co-creation of knowledge, Paulo Freire once said, is always a process of dialogue. Dialogue is the opportunity available to me to open up to the thinking of the other and the other to open up to the thinking of me and thereby we do not wither away in isolation. This appreciation is a tangible source of hope and the basis for building capacity. From this perspective, capacity building may be thought of as learning how

to expand and develop beyond where we are and progress toward a vision. Yet often, capacity is determined by how much don't we know - a deficit knowledge.

There is a sense that the effectiveness of the OCI would be enhanced if the system of measurement were "humanized;" focused more on the quality of human relationships. Currently, the empirical evaluations of the OCI are determined against a techno-rational model of ideal conditions or assumptions of the functional capacities of organizing. These quantitative results risk creating a static and one dimensional picture of a dynamic living system that characterizes its inadequacies, rather than affirms its accomplishments. The belief that adherence to a mechanized systemic process is the only way to improve and reach best performance and results often runs counter to the creative and generative forces of change and innovation. The human-logic models of organizing that focus on relationships unleash these forces, while the techno-rational model of organizing risks stifling the life of forgiveness, love and joy in relationships.

The present situation was described as having "the cart before the horse." As an organization, CRWRC has deeply invested in and has placed high priority on the quantitative data of the OCI, while the staff have come to understand that foundation of capacity building is built upon the non-quantifiable factors of nurturing relationships and fostering hope. This has important implications for the impact of CRWRC's work in the field, because the questions addressed in the OCI tool are in fact an intervention on the partner organizations; they are performative, in that they direct attention towards and implant ideas that directly influence organizations' reality. Therefore the staff believe that it is most important that the OCI become not only more culturally and contextually relevant, but also emphasize the primacy of relationship, appreciation, and hope; those factors that contribute to organizational capacity and vitality as they understand it. In other words, they asked, "is the ultimate value of this tool found, not in its ability to determine an objective measurement which can provide comparative results, but rather in the opportunity to support and develop the groups? It is not the results we get, but how we use the tool that matters most."

They explained that because the OCI was often perceived as an imposition upon the partners, that yielded results of questionable utility for the field staff, much of the challenge has been how each region may best interpret the tool to meet their unique situations. As a result, there are radically divergent philosophies for scoring this same tool across regions, which reflect a wide ranging sense of purpose, value, and validity of the measurements. They envisioned that the OCI will become universally accepted as an intervention tool rather than a measurement tool. It will be reframed as a process of opening dialogue about pressing needs and successes in organizations that will lead to consciousness raising and growth. In many regions this process has already begun. For example, in the Philippines, Edward Brouwer conducted a study to gather a consensus of opinion from his partner organizations about the SRS tool. He sought the input from these partners with the intent of improving and refining the tool in ways that were more reflective of their cultural

context. In the end, by opening the tool to this participatory examination, he gained the commitment of the partner groups and recreated it as an opportunity for learning and evaluation.

Ultimately, they feel that CRWRC needs to determine whether the central purpose of the OCI is to monitor or to move the organizations toward growth, vitality and development? As a tool for learning, i.e., development, they believe that they may be able to obtain a far more complete picture of the organizations; use it to create a "multidimensional color photograph." CRWRC needs to define what the OCI is to be used for, and then use it for that purpose. They hope that it could become "a collaborative process of discovery in which, together with our partners, we may determine the dimensions of capacity and how to measure them; together we should determine the questions we ask; and together arrive at the appropriate score."

6. There is a desire to be more intentional about supporting the spiritual well-being of the staff as a primary concern for the life and effectiveness of CRWRC.

Across the board, there was expressed a direct linkage between their spirituality and the mission/purpose of their development efforts. Because they are met with countless challenges in their daily lives in these regions that leave them unsure of what to do, they continuously call upon their faith to provide guidance and determination. Many expressed that what they value most about CRWRC is that it enables them to live out their ideals, to live according to their faith. In fact, one of the core factors that was said to give life to CRWRC was the centrality of faith. It is the defining character of the CRWRC culture, and development efforts. It is "God centered" in that CRWRC emphasizes and affirms spiritual growth, flexibility, and potentiality for change.

In Asia, Paul Brink shared a poignant story of his first years with CRWRC in Bangladesh fifteen years ago. According to the Bangladesh laws, the staff were not permitted to engage in any mission work, only development. He was quite distressed by constraints in this region because he had joined CRWRC over the Peace Corps because of his desire to work in both "word and deed." After three years, he began work with a pilot project, Swosika, in which he discovered a stirring energy for Christian word. With them, he pioneered a new strategy that enabled him to express the word of faith in his working relationship with the group members. Importantly, his story highlights two qualities of the CRWRC culture: (1) the ability to act consistently with his existing personal core values; and (2) the freedom to innovate and develop new strategies and approaches.

Accordingly, it was generally agreed that the CRWRC already has good systems in place to support them in carrying out what they believe. But they also believe that broadening the scope and improving the ways in which spiritual well-being is nurtured is a central issue for heightening the vitality of CRWRC. As was stated in

Latin America, "it is often difficult to express our appreciation of each other. The expression of the positive is more emotional and therefore more difficult, but we must work to consciously affirm our ideals of trust and interpersonal receptiveness."

In West Africa, they stated their commitment in the following proposition:

Spiritual Well Being of Staff

"Just as Jesus moved from place to place during his ministry on earth meeting both the spiritual and physical needs of people, patiently and consistently discipling them, CRWRC West Africa is committed to discipling staff as it is concerned about their physical well being.

"CRWRC West Africa annual staff plans include personnel spiritual expectations and likewise form part of the major items of staff evaluation.

"Going by the development of the Church globally, CRWRC West Africa has in place a concrete arrangement whereby henceforth, retreats are planned and attended by international and national staff. These retreats will be regular at field levels amongst staff to enhance free, active and maximum participation and benefit. Attention will be paid to the design and implementation of the conferences and training events to the spirituality which inspires staff in their daily work.

"CRWRC West Africa gives a serious consideration to the spiritual life of staff as reflected on the region's annual evaluation form adapted from CRWRC International Employee Questionnaire.

"The next scheduled CRWRC West Africa Regional meeting incorporates real life spiritual formation exercise of not less than three hours duration. Resource persons will be invited."

7. There is a desire to define organizational capacity in life-centric terms, that is, to see organizations as living systems (trees, plants, babies-to-adults, soccer teams, etc.) that are sustained and energized by myriad forces and factors in their environment.

Appendix D

Participants (non-CRWRC) in Appreciative Inquiry training during listening visits

Country	Number of partner groups	Non-CRWRC persons trained (staff, board members and guests)		
		M	F	Total
East Africa				
Malawi	1	7	14	21
Uganda	8	100	35	135
Zambia	2	21	7	28
Tanzania	3	29	5	34
Kenya	4	11	2	13
Mozambique	NR	NR	NR	NR
West Africa				
Mali	3	17	5	22
Niger	2	10		10
Senegal	2		18	18
Sierra Leone	2	15	13	28
Nigeria	5	139	125	264
Guinea		2		2
Central/Latin America	NR			
Asia				
Philippines	7	46	56	102
India	2	8		8
Bangladesh	3	NR*	NR	NR
Indonesia	May			
TOTAL AI LEARNERS		405	268	673

*Complete report being translated from Bangla; no trainees numbers included in summary report.

Appendix E

A story from the field: a CRWRC staffmember uses appreciative inquiry for the first time

The asking of appreciative-inquiry type questions was not in my original plan for this planning workshop. But, after coming back from the AI/OCI seminar in Nairobi and reflecting on how my previous interactions with the people in Ukuru had been, I thought that if I was not prepared to do an appreciative inquiry on the spot, I could at least inject some life and hope into the planning process that I had been prepared to guide them through. So I used the "components of planning" approach and used AI type questions to help them think about the good that does happen in their situation.

When I first came to Ukuru, other more experienced development workers had warned me that the people in Ukuru had a sense of hopelessness that was not easy to break. I was told that they were difficult people to work with, and that was why one development worker had given up [and gone] to work with the Lugbara where he had more success.

Often in my conversations with people we discussed generally about the life of people in Ukuru. They presented me with a hopeless marketing situation, one which made it impossible for the people to afford much of what they needed — education for their children, proper medical care, farming inputs, adequate clothing and blankets. They presented me with several cases of children dying of measles, upper respiratory infections, and malaria. One can even read in the plans that the groups turned in to the UAPDC [the CRWRC partner] a great list of so many problems — especially poignant is the phrase that a few groups had picked up from some westerner who was equally hopeless about their plight: "the degrading cycle of poverty continues."

The first AI type question was off the top of my head and meant as a time-filler and something fun to do while we waited for other committee members to show up. Now, I realize that the learning, the self-affirmation, and just the fun of it would have been helpful to the whole committee and its process. The "fun" helped to get them to unwind and not be so uptight about their first time through this seemingly arduous planning process. It helped them to enjoy their time with each other.

A few things that were appreciated in this question and the others that were posed were referred back to, consciously and subconsciously, throughout the planning session. They were included in the plan, set up as values, and referred to to "spur themselves on to good works". The common themes that came out were commitment, perseverance, contributing to the needs of others or the group, cooperation, hard work, and using locally available resources to achieve what they want to achieve.

(Doc. 15)

Appreciative Inquirer

"Inquiring minds want to appreciate!"
January 1996 • Issue 1

Why Another Newsletter?

There are hundreds of pieces of paper in my office, all related to the Appreciative Inquiry OCI process. Every day, it seems, another 50 pages get written somewhere in the world.

I could copy all of these documents and send them to every field but, in the interest of saving time and paper, I will instead distill the reams of reports into a few intriguing ideas.

If you want more information about anything mentioned contact Scott Johnson for a copy of the appropriate document.

Thesaurus Check

Some people are getting tired of the term "appreciative inquiry" so next time use "sympathetic investigation" or "obliged probe." If you need an antonym try "critical reply."

Financial Reporting

The important thing to remember is that all costs related to grant activities need to be recorded on the OCI field reports. Otherwise we cannot get reimbursed from USAID.

Schedule

Listening tours are

happening all over the world. The next cross-regional meeting is the February 12-14 meeting of the OCI Regional Managers and Regional Directors in Grand Rapids.

East Africa

"If we really believe that we are made in the image of God, we will be more careful with our words."

"Our emphasis on the family -- income, health, literacy -- has been the foundation of our best practices of capacity building."

"We need to be more committed to the process of capacity building than to a tool to measure it. We have to accept the fact that it is going to be messy."

West Africa

Some best practices:

- *Wholistic Approach*
- *Commitment to Reaching the Poor*
- *Working with Christians and Non-Christians*
- *Results Oriented*

Seven key themes are:

- *Spiritual Well Being*
- *Shared Vision*
- *Empowerment*
- *Modeling*
- *Communication*

- *Social Justice*
- *Sustainability*

"The OCI should be used to measure progress not to compare partners."

"The shift in focus from problems to possibilities helps me in my training at the grassroots."

Asia

Some best practices:

- *Learning Organization*
- *Planning Process*
- *Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement*

"The true reality may only be found through critical analysis of the hard conditions of life. At the same time, I see this as a hope to get out of the muck of life."

"The uniqueness of CRWRC lies in its ability to embody forgiveness and love."

"We need to agree what the OCI is to be used for and then [only] use it for that purpose."

"CRWRC should imagine each organizations as a tree, a bakery, or a football team -- something alive instead of a 'well oiled machine.'"

Latin America

"New ideas come from the fringes. The outside is the

place of innovation and change.”

“We currently assume that what we are doing is the best. We need to reexamine that assumption.”

“The evaluation process itself is de-motivating. It focuses on our failures rather than our success.”

“John DeHaan asserts that the number of hierarchical layers needs to be significantly reduced.”

“Capacity building is learning to expand and develop beyond where you are.”

Paulo Freire

“I do not understand human existence, and the struggle needed to improve it, apart from hope and dream. Hopelessness is but hope that has lost its bearing. We need hope the way fish need unpolluted water.”

Note: Paulo Freire did not actually attend an OCI conference. This quote is from a book.

Jim Bradley

A good system of measurement has four benefits:

- It gives us the ability to anticipate events.
- It enriches language by helping us transcend our subjectivity.
- It enhances justice.
- It provides an incentive for improvement.

There are three requirements needed to realize these benefits:

- An unambiguous definition

of the characteristic being measured

- An interpersonal consensus on ranking relative to the characteristic
- A technique of measurement which is consistent with these requirements

CRWRC's core values are restoring the Kingdom of God, stewardship, interdependence, and justice. However, the characteristics we measure are technical, management, networking, board control, and wholistic ministry.

The number of questions asked about each area of the OCI on one survey form:

Technical	5
Management	22
Networking	2
Board Control	3
Wholistic Ministry	3

Milton Esman

“Groups like CRWRC need to go against the current political trends. We need to recognize that behavior and cultural change do not happen in two to four years, so we cannot use the “Ross Perot” method of addressing problems: analyze, plan, fix, done. Instead, we must have patience and optimism. Inevitably the truth of the situation will cause the needed changes in emphasis.”

“Organizational capacity

is the ability to accomplish tasks for the common good like local infrastructure, peace and order, political pressure, and common services. Western society tends to focus on individual skills but many non-western societies value the community over the individual and so organizations become even more important.”

Devotions on AI

Concerns have been expressed and are still being expressed about whether or not Appreciative Inquiry is a Christian approach. The East Africa staff has prepared some devotionals around AI themes. Perhaps the best passage to quote is Philippians 4:8,9.

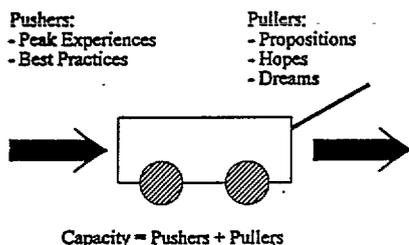
“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”

Appreciative Inquirer

"Inquiring minds want to appreciate!"
February 1996 + Issue 2

Regional Managers Meet

The OCI Regional Managers met last week to talk about what they were learning in the Appreciative Inquiry process. Perhaps the easiest way to



A Picture from Joe Lamigo

summarize these meetings is to give a ten word answer to the five central questions of the meetings.

#1) How do partner organizations understand organizational capacity building when it is at its best?

Relationships; Reciprocity; Participation; Partnership; Local Knowledge; Transparent Systems That Facilitate Results.

#2) What are CRWRC's best practices in capacity building?

Solid Management; Participatory, Relational, and Process Consultation; Wholistic Ministry; Promoting Egalitarianism.

#3) What is the ideal

relationship between CRWRC and partner organizations.

Personal Relationships; Appreciative, Motivational and Lasting; Enriching Each Other; Sharing Values.

#4) What are we learning about how to define partnership at its best?

Interdependence; Faith Building; Mutuality; Empowering; Nurturing; Predictable; Long Term; Effective Service.

#5) What works best in regard to measuring organizational capacity building?

Monitor Instead of Measure; Stories; Agreement About Capacity; A Satisfying Event.

Thematic Analysis

Jim Ludema has now spent time with CRWRC staff around the world. In a recent paper he suggested seven common themes.

1) Staff are committed to monitoring the progress of the organizations they work with.

2) Staff want the OCI tool to be developed and improved by partner organizations.

3) Staff and partners want an OCI tool that is rooted in local culture and builds on local wisdom.

4) Staff see that CRWRC's

ability to work with organizations will be improved by strengthening the OCI system.

5) Staff want the OCI tool to be used more for learning and less for monitoring.

6) Staff recognize that the effectiveness of CRWRC is built on their own spiritual well-being.

7) Staff and partners understand organizational capacity as a characteristic of a complex living system.

Some Unexpected Results of AI

In Sierra Leone partner group staff were able to talk about their experiences during the civil war and build hope for the future.

In the Dominican Republic a strained relationship between CRWRC and a partner group was healed.

In Nigeria a partner used AI to finish in two days a strategic plan they had worked on for two years.

In India a partner group,

Conference Dates

March 26-28	Latin America
April/May	West Africa
May 7-10	East Africa
July 8-12	Asia
August 18-22	Stakeholders

discouraged after a painful evaluation, renewed their hope and vision at the AI conference.

Unique Questions

Case Western has been teaching us that the questions we ask are interventions. All of the listening tours have used the same basic protocol questions but some fields asked some additional questions.

The Sierra Leone listening tour included the question, "When have you experienced an organization going through a change?" Answering this question prepared the group to think about the future.

All of the East Africa listening tours asked what cultural values the participants valued most.

Focusing on the positive aspects of African culture was a powerful

experience. On participant said, "We used to think it was our culture that was holding us back."

Interesting Translation

All of the listening tours that were in a language other than English required lots of extra preparation. However, the process of translating the AI concepts yielded some interesting results.

In Haiti "peak experience" was translated to "I like it a lot, a lot, a lot."

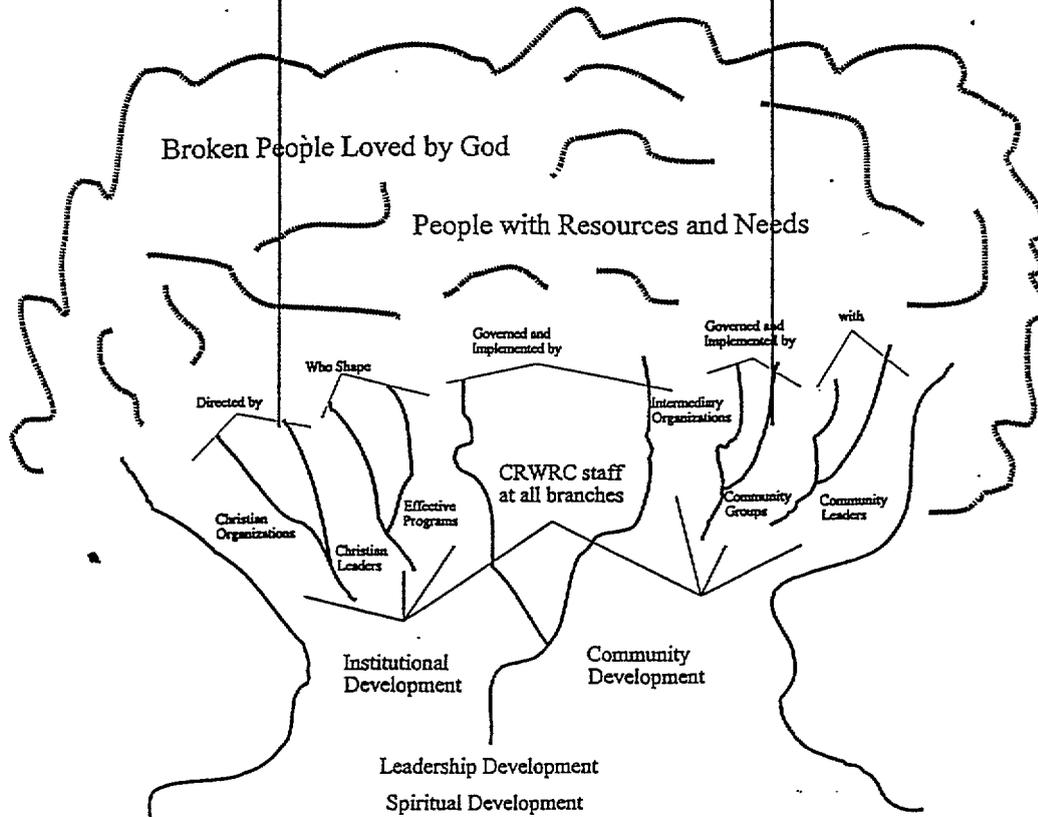
In West Africa "provocative proposition" was translated as "characteristic of a renewed organization."

In Mali participants had a difficult time talking about what they appreciated about

themselves. The question, "What does the community appreciate about you?" was a good substitute.

A Living System Picture

Last summer when a group of CRWRC staff met to talk about the Leader's Resource Manual they agreed that the CRWRC strategy needed a new picture. They came up with a tree rooted in spiritual and leadership development and the people we work with represented as flourishing leaves.



Appreciative Inquirer

"Inquiring minds want to appreciate!"

March 1996 • Issue 3

Stories, Stories, Stories

Several people here have been intrigued by all the stories that are being told as a part of the Appreciative Inquiry process. Sometimes, we only see a hint of the stories in the notes and wish we could hear more details. Some of these stories could make good narratives. (hint, hint)

The OCI - AI Manual

At the end of the OCI grant all of the lessons and stories from all of the listening tours and conferences will be summarized in a manual. This manual will be shared with dozens of development organizations.

The manual will be packed with stories and case studies held together with analysis of what CRWRC is learning from our partners about development and organizational capacity building. Here is a tentative outline for the manual:

A. Core Chapters

1. Background and History
2. Appreciative Inquiry - A new Way to Listen
3. Listening to Southern Partners
4. Redefining Partnership
5. What is Organizational Capacity?
6. Building Capacity in Partnership
7. Measuring Capacity Building

B. Case Studies - In-depth case studies from each region explaining the Appreciative Inquiry process and telling a story of a good partnership that built capacity

1. East Africa
2. Latin America
3. West Africa
4. Asia

C. Appendices

1. Description of the 3-year process
2. Sample of an old SRS survey
3. Jim Bradley's materials on measurement
4. CRWRC's modifications of AI
5. Bibliography

How You Can Contribute

I need your participation to make this manual the best it can be. You can contribute:

- stories
- case studies
- ideas
- analysis
- reviews of related books

If you write anything that you think could help with the production of this manual send a copy to your OCI Regional Manager (Ivan, Joe, Caspar, or Will). They will make sure that I get a copy. Better yet, send a copy to me too.

Scott Johnson

Appreciative Inquirer

"Inquiring minds want to appreciate!"

April 1996 • Issue 4

Cheerleading for OCI

I am very excited about the whole OCI grant. I think the process of us listening to our partner groups will not only help CRWRC but will spill over to the wider development community.

The biggest challenge will be to communicate what we are learning to a broader audience. What follows is an explanation of appreciative inquiry from the perspective of Sarah Dieleman, a volunteer who has been in Guatemala this year.

A Story from Guatemala

"Picture it: a woman, married 30 years, is criticized by her husband -- she's old and ugly; she doesn't do the house work; she can't be trusted to handle the money; she hasn't raised the kids properly." The CRWRC staff person in Guatemala is conducting a workshop on a new system of evaluating the ability of a groups to accomplish the task of community development.

This workshop is for leaders in the village of Polochic. The staff person offers examples from their own lives. "Now this wife, her husband judges her as a bad wife. But is she necessarily? Why was she appreciated by her husband in

the first few years of marriage, but now can't seem to do anything right? Has she changed, or has her husband changed? She may not be a bad wife; but the negative evaluation by her husband is certain to have a negative effect on her future work -- on her energy and spirit and effectiveness.

The participants in the workshop laugh and nod knowingly; they raise their hands to offer explanations or to ask questions. They say that, instead of criticizing his wife, the husband could appreciate his wife's past and all her hard work, and at the same time recognize her value in the present situation in the midst of the limitations -- that, even in her old age, she has much to offer, such as advice, knowledge, wisdom, company, and spiritual guidance.

They are learning about "appreciative inquiry," a theory which is used by a group to first discover, understand, and analyze their common vision; and then to take action to fulfill that vision. It fits well with CRWRC's goal of empowerment of the poor and of affirming the dignity of every human being and their

ability, with the grace of God, to help themselves.

Going one step further to apply the idea to a community instead of a marriage, the leaders and organizers of Polochic could understand how, when things are qualified as negative when they may actually be positive, when people and groups and situations are devalued, the effect is apathy and inaction. They learn to value their own lives, those of others, and the collective life of their community.

This is an especially important lesson to learn for those indigenous groups of rural campesinos in Guatemala, such as those in Polochic, who for centuries have been attacked with discrimination from all sides. They are starting to realize that their human potential, which was not valued in the past, is great and should be used for community service; that instead of conforming to the hopelessness of poverty, they have the right to understand the reality of their situation and to appreciate the resources, values, history, and future hopes; that, although they have been culturally marginalized

and oppressed to the effect that their very culture has been made a disgrace and damnation, the richness of their culture is actually a blessing from God; that every people has its own culture, and none is better or worse than another; and, lastly, that instead of being predestined to suffer in this world as second-class citizens, they have been predestined to serve, to be salt and light in the world, to bring

hope to the hopeless.

They are encouraged to recall and recount on paper their community's lifeline, complete with its visible ups and downs. These histories give identity and value to the community, as well as the opportunity to reflect on past experiences and on what things had more success than others. In this way, they are able to identify specific ways in which

God has blessed them.

The idea of appreciative inquiry is that what the group envisions for their future will be possible, even inevitable. It is when the group takes the best of what is and forms the imagination of what might be. The process allows groups to be realistic visionaries. Since the ideals are grounded in realities, there is the confidence to try to make things happen.

Appendix G

Appreciative Inquiry and Measuring Organizational Capacity

Scott Johnson - April 23, 1996

1. Background and History of CRWRC

- a. Since its beginnings CRWRC has changed its approach to development. One way of looking at this change is to look at four axes of change.
 - i. transferring resources → teaching skills → imbedding capacity → building capacity in partnership.
 - ii. good intentions → management by objectives → measuring partners → evaluating partnership
 - iii. helping individuals → training leaders → consulting with organizations → innovating new ways of working
 - iv. do-gooder team → well-oiled machine → living models of organization (systems thinking)
- b. In this process of evolution we have made significant steps when we realized the potential that was already there on the field: educated staff, motivated leaders, local organizations. Our study is an intentional process of listening to partner organizations.

2. Appreciative Inquiry

- a. AI is a philosophy, not a technique. It gives us a new way to think about how organizations work. It is not a step-by-step process. It points out some fundamental concepts that, for CRWRC, are quite radical
 - i. Appreciation is energizing for an organization and for individuals. Focusing on problems takes away motivation. "Problem solving is confrontation. Appreciative Inquiry is reconciliation."
 - ii. The fact that an organization exists and functions at all indicates that something good is happening to bind together these totally deprived folks. We can make the biggest impact if we can tap into what keeps the organization together.
 - iii. The thing that moves an organization is how it envisions the future. The past and present do not need to determine the future.
 - iv. Individuals will be effectively integrated into an organization to the extent that they have "full voice" or feel that they are being heard.
- b. If we take this approach it changes how we think about ourselves and other organizations.
 - i. It moves us away from the management consultation model to a partnership of reciprocity where we need to learn to listen better.
 - ii. It means that we that we work together to build hope and excitement instead of trying to fix things.
 - iii. It means that we concentrate on strengthening relationships.
- c. Does this sound too "soft?" Early in the process we heard a story about what it

is like to be on the other end of our management consultation. A woman from a partner group said, "You come to measure us so you can tell us how inadequate we are and then you increase the scores over time so that you can prove that you have done some good."

3. **Listening to Ourselves, Listening to Partners**

- a. What we have done
 - i. March 1995 - Four regional managers were introduced to the basics of Appreciative Inquiry. They came with plenty of doubts and questions that were encountered on the fields as well.
 - (1) Aren't we just ignoring the problems?
 - (2) What does this have to do with organizational capacity?
 - (3) All of this is fun, but will it do any good?
 - ii. Summer 1996 - Conferences of all staff in each region. Here the four regional managers presented the material that they had just learned.
 - iii. Fall/Winter 1996 - Listening Tours. CRWRC staff spent time listening to partners using a protocol based on AI.
 - (1) A series of questions
 - (a) When have you been most excited about your work? Describe this experience.
 - (b) What do you value most about yourself?
 - (c) What are your organization's best practices?
 - (d) What are the most positive aspects of your culture?
 - (e) Based on these questions what gives life to your organization?
 - (f) What hopes do you have for your organization?
 - (2) Then based on the answers to these questions "provocative propositions" were written.
 - (3) Finally, partner groups were asked to do some thinking about organizational capacity. What is it? How can it be built.
- b. What we have learned. Here are some quotes from the regions.
 - i. East Africa
 - (1) "If we really believe that we are made in the image of God, we will be more careful with our words."
 - (2) "Our emphasis on the family – income, health, literacy – has been the foundation of our best practices of capacity building."
 - (3) "We need to be more committed to the process of capacity building than to a tool to measure it. We have to accept the fact that it is going to be messy."
 - ii. West Africa
 - (1) "The OCI should be used to measure progress not to compare partners."
 - (2) "The shift in focus from problems to possibilities helps me in my training at the grassroots."
 - iii. Asia
 - (1) "The true reality may only be found through critical analysis of the hard conditions of life. At the same time, I see this as a hope to get out of the muck of life."

(2) "The uniqueness of CRWRC lies in its ability to embody forgiveness and love."

(3) "We need to agree what the OCI is to be used for and then [only] use it for that purpose."

(4) "CRWRC should imagine each organizations as a tree, a bakery, or a football team –something alive instead of a 'well oiled machine.'"

iv. Latin America

(1) "New ideas come from the fringes. The outside is the place of innovation and change."

(2) "We currently assume that what we are doing is the best. We need to reexamine that assumption."

(3) "The evaluation process itself is de-motivating. It focuses on our failures rather than our success."

(4) "Capacity building is learning to expand and develop beyond where you are."

4. **Redefining Partnership**

- a. More reciprocity, less paternalism
- b. The "phase-out" ideas is not very popular, even if funding must stop we need to find ways to continue the relationship with organizations.
- c. Personal Relationships are important.
- d. A good definition of partnership is when both parties bring values to the table.
- e. A partnership should enrich both parties.
- f. We need to get a handle on what "interdependence" really looks like.
- g. As we work together we should each grow in our faith.
- h. The whole point of all of this should be more effective service.

5. **What is Organizational Capacity?**

- a. Growth and learning need to be part of the definition.
- b. It probably includes something about organizational spirituality.
- c. The ability to create new knowledge and innovate new forms of organization. This goes directly against our usual way of trying to measure each organization on a standard 1 to 5 scale.

6. **Building Capacity in Partnership**

- a. Are you building capacity or the relationship?
- b. Instead of just consultation you probably end up doing more things like: spending time building relationships, appreciating each others history and culture, building new knowledge, and envisioning the future together.
- c. Effectiveness and efficiency need to be redefined.

7. **Measuring Capacity Building**

- a. Why measure? - Some traditional answers
 - i. Enriches language by transcending individual subjectivity, enhances communication.

- ii. Enhances fairness. Helps us to overcome our personal biases.
 - iii. Provides an incentive for ongoing improvement.
 - iv. Provides for accountability.
 - v. Not all the effects of measurement are positive. IQ is a classic example. It is harmful because it makes it seem like we know more about intelligence than we do.
- b. Why measure? - An AI answer.
- i. Measurement (or evaluation) can create a system that allows us to revisit the issues of relationship and capacity building.
 - ii. We want a tool of evaluation that does not set a rigid standard but empowers an organization to compare themselves to what they hope to be in 10 years.
 - iii. Agreeing together with a partner group about capacity indicators can help identify the dynamic forces of the relationship instead of searching for flaws.
 - iv. We measure to strengthen our relational capacity.
 - v. Can we build a measurement system that does not limit?
- c. What should our technique of measurement be?
- i. Categorical - put things in clearly defined categories, these different categories do not have to have a value attached to them.
 - ii. Ordinal - the categories are ranked in a sequential order. A is better than B is better than C.
 - iii. Numerical - can only be used to measure things that act like numbers. People and organizations do not act like numbers so the OCI should probably not be numerical.
- d. What are we trying to measure?
- i. Many human concepts are hard to define but still important so we simplify the concept to an operational definition. The operational definition can never fully capture the complexity of human life but if we do not simplify then we cannot measure.
 - ii. "Is the sidewalk wet?" could be our operational definition of whether or not it is raining.
 - iii. If we are going to measure organizational capacity we need to go through three steps of abstraction:
 - (1) Identify the qualities that are important and ignore the rest. This step helps us to clarify our values.
 - (2) Find indicators. How can I tell when the quality is present? It is important to do this step second. Otherwise, you end up looking for the most easily measured instead of the most important.
 - (3) List the categories for each indicator.

Appendix H

Agenda and Objectives for West Africa Region's Second Conference

AGENDA

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

DAY 1.

Sharing the Results of Inquiry (Listening Visits) with Partners:

- > Process
- > Outputs

DAY 2.

Describing Capacities of a Viable Organization

Identifying the Principles and Practices of Capacity Building within an Organization and in Partnership with other Organizations

Discussion on characteristics of an effective monitoring tool.

Day 3.

Developing a Tool(s) for monitoring organizational capacity building .

Day 4.

Action Planning for using the Tool(s) Developed.

Anticipating the 3rd WA OCI Conference (1997)

Evaluation

DAY 5.

Project Visit

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the conference, participants will have:

Skills

- > Monitoring Tool
 - Developed monitoring tool for capacity building

Knowledge

- > Appreciative Inquiry
Shared experiences of the appreciative inquiry process
- > Organizational Capacities
Described capacities of a viable organization
- > Principles and Practices of Capacity Building
Explained principles and practices of capacity building
- > Effective Monitoring
Identified characteristics of an effective monitoring tool
- > Other Participants
Interacted with other WA CRWRC Partners
- > Three Year OCI Action Research
Articulated CRWRC/CWRU/ US AID Process

Attitudes

- > Commitment to Planning
Completed an Action Plan
- > Commitment to Regular and Meaningful Monitoring
Shared importance of designing monitoring tool(s)
- > Valuing Interdependence
Engaged in mutual learning with other participants