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EVALUATION
BENIN INDIGENOUS NGO STRENGTHENING
(GRANT NUMBER 624-0210-G-00-4023-00)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Benin Indigenous Non-Governmental Organization Strengthening grant (BINGOS) is a 3-year program of training and support for selected NGOs in Benin. This evaluation was held in anticipation of the close of project scheduled for February 1997.
2. BINGOS has three components:
 - training for key NGO staff in management skills and organizational theory, and in the design and management of development projects
 - financial and technical support to help NGOs to put these skills into practice, including institutional support grants and a fund for small projects
 - promotion of collaboration between NGOs, including support for federations of NGOs and facilitation of links between local and international NGOs
3. 33 NGOs have been accepted into the BINGOS program in two annual admissions; 23 currently remain in the program. By the closure date the project will have met or exceeded targets for the training and institutional support components.
4. The project has been less successful in promoting ties and collaboration between NGOs. Beyond sponsoring some exchanges among participating NGOs, BINGOS has not developed an effective strategy for promoting associations of NGOs or for working with existing federations.
5. The umbrella grant program was designed to forge links between local NGOs and international PVOs which can provide technical and financial support. The program is expensive and the results are disappointing. The objectives of this component would be better achieved by a more flexible program which allows for a wider range of potential partners.
6. Participant NGOs find the training programs valuable and effective. All NGOs are taking steps to implement the key principles and procedures taught. NGO staff appreciates the technical training in management skills and procedures and in project design. They are more resistant to the ideas of separation of roles and, in particular, the separation of power between executive and administrative council.
7. As the project comes to its close the training program should be amended to include themes which will specifically help the NGOs to survive after Africare - cost recovery and similar autofinancing strategies.

8. Africare's efforts to promote collaboration between NGOs have been most successful within the group of project NGOs. BINGOS has sponsored a number of exchanges and collaborations, and many others have taken place without direct project sponsorship. NGOs credit meetings and training programs for letting them build ties of trust and common interest.

9. NGOs participate in some project decisions through representatives elected to the BINGOS Council. The role of the Council is strictly advisory and mostly limited to evaluation of NGO proposals for microproject funding. As the project nears its end or a new phase, the role of the Council should be expanded. The Council can make useful contributions in planning of end-of-project and/or follow-on activities and in informing member NGOs of these. The Council could also be developed as the governing board of an association of BINGOS participant NGOs. For this purpose the procedures for electing Council members should be reviewed to ensure that all NGOs, including those outside Cotonou, are represented.

10. Africare's efforts through the BINGOS project to promote collaboration between NGOs, to promote advocacy roles, and to support federations of NGOs have not been successful. The exception is the collaboration within the BINGOS group. These issues are complex, and the goals and strategies were not as well defined in the project proposal as were those for the training and support of individual NGOs. If there is to be a second phase of the project promotion of collaboration should be an important component if not the main theme of the new project.

11. BINGOS has made an effort to promote governance and democratization. The strengthening of NGOs as a class of social actors contributes to these processes. Some project actions, such as the umbrella grant to the Joint Center and the support of an ad hoc network of NGOs advocating a free and fair election, have directly addressed governance issues. The project has however done little to link the governance and democratization interventions to the rest of the project.

12. The project could strengthen these links in two ways. To make the NGOs more participatory and democratic internally, BINGOS should study the decision processes of general assemblies more closely and use the Joint Center NGOs to train others in methods of internal democracy. The project could also take more direct action to sponsor collaboration between NGOs and government agents at the local (prefecture/sous-prefecture) level.

13. Africare's management of the project has generally been good, keeping in mind a certain learning curve. The staff has shown an excellent ability to learn and now has a strong base of experience to work from.

14. Some NGO criticism of the project suggests that the staff may be overextended due to project demands. NGOS also fault project staff with not being communicative enough on some key issues such as purpose of visits, suspensions, and rejection of proposals for microprojects.

15. Recommendations include:

- The project has proved its worth in training and strengthening NGOs and can be considered for extension to other regions.
- The existing program needs at least the proposed seven-month no-cost extension to complete its ongoing program without too much rush. It is also an excellent base for possible further phases of the program.
- Africare also must start to prepare participant NGOs to face the inevitable point when the project ends. Africare needs to define criteria and processes for graduating NGOs from the program, and for turning over more control of BINGOS to the member NGOs.
- A second phase of the project, working with the same NGOs, should focus on internal democracy/participation issues within the NGOs and on advocacy roles, links between NGOS and links between NGOs and government decision-makers.
- The umbrella grant structure should be replaced. Other more efficient methods for providing NGOs with special technical training and links to the outside include use of consultants, training programs in-country and abroad, and links with local partners.

I. I. Introduction - statement of project

The Benin Indigenous NGO Strengthening grant (BINGOS) is a program of training and support for selected NGOs in Benin. The project was submitted to USAID by Africare as an unsolicited proposal which addressed stated USAID-Benin objectives of "strengthening governance and furthering the democratization process" (USAID/Benin Project Review Letter, Annex C, Project Proposal). Africare and USAID signed an agreement in May 1994, but the effective starting date was set as March 1, 1994 with the project scheduled to end in February of 1997.

Indigenous NGOs are growing in number and importance in Benin as the country builds democratic institutions and moves away from a centralized development strategy. Most of these NGOs are young and have little experience either in self-management or in their roles as agents of development and democracy. The purpose of the BINGOS grant is to

strengthen the capacity of indigenous NGOs to implement responsive grass-roots self-help activities and to serve as intermediary organizations in channeling and processing grass-roots demands

(Project Proposal, p. 1). The project proposes a program of activities to develop NGO competence in the following domains:

1. Management: Expanding and strengthening the NGOs' institutional capacities to programmatically and financially manage, implement, evaluate and support grass-roots development projects
2. Program: Helping NGOs to design, develop and initiate responsive grass-roots activities funded through the project and other funding agencies
3. Advocacy: Encouraging efforts and enhancing the capability of NGOs to process and promote grass-roots issues
4. Collaborative action: Supporting and encouraging partnerships, collaboration and cooperation between and among local NGOs.

At the heart of the BINGOS project is a training program in organizational and project management for NGO personnel. Participating NGOs receive institutional support grants to help them make necessary changes in the organization's structure and procedures. A microproject fund finances projects developed by NGOs during the training in project design. BINGOS staff monitors the NGOs' progress after training and provides ongoing technical assistance in the areas covered by those training programs.

In addition, the project promotes collaboration between NGOs and supports NGO associations. One objective of this program is to strengthen the ability of the NGO movement, and through it individual NGOs, to bring grass-roots issues into national policy-making arenas. Another objective is to promote links between NGOs which will increase the capacity and the resources available to individual organizations.

Africare has a mandate to provide support and training through BINGOS to NGO federations and groupings, and particularly to those which act as advocacy groups for grass-roots issues. The Project Proposal states as well that BINGOS will organize workshops on advocacy and on policy issues, and that the project will sponsor exchanges between NGOs. A fund within BINGOS is reserved for grants to American PVOs which will initiate joint programs with local NGOs.

II. Methodology

The terms of reference of this evaluation call for an assessment of the project on the following points:

1. Progress toward achieving objectives
2. Impact of activities on the overall situation of beneficiaries
3. Process assessment focusing on Africare's capacity to react to change
4. Lessons learned; conclusions and recommendations.

BINGOS represents a new approach to working with NGOs for Africare. Further, Africare has only recently begun to work in Benin and has little experience in implementation of projects of any kind in this setting. BINGOS may serve as an anchor for further activities with NGOs in Benin and could be a model for NGO strengthening projects in other countries. This evaluation, then, places particular emphasis on the effectiveness of the BINGOS program in achieving project objectives (impact) and the areas in which project design could be improved or expanded (lessons learned).

The evaluation proceeded in three stages:

1. Review of the extensive and comprehensive documentation of the BINGOS project maintained by Africare-Benin
2. Field visits to NGOs, interviews with key personnel, and when possible visits to the sites of NGO activities. Non-BINGOS NGOs were also visited, including several which had left the program.
3. Interviews with Africare personnel.

Time, the objectives of the evaluation, the complex nature of the project, and the lack of substantive baseline indicators all favored a qualitative assessment over a strictly quantitative analysis. The logic of the inquiry and sources of information are discussed in more detail in Annex 1 below. The collection of information was semi-structured: standardized enough so that the same basic information was gathered from each source, but free enough to allow each team member to pursue a line of inquiry if this was indicated. The analysis below is the product of a great deal of discussion between individual team members as within the team as a whole.

III. Target groups and assessment of impact

This evaluation throughout focuses on the project's effects and impact on the participant NGOs. This is consistent with the project's philosophy and the proposed interventions. BINGOS has set up an "ideal type" of NGO which the project is trying to develop (Table 1 below).

The measure of the impact of the project will be the degree to which BINGOS NGOs, and eventually others, come to accept and to emulate this ideal type. BINGOS is, as its name states, an institution-building and strengthening project. The effectiveness of the project must be assessed on criteria which reflect this orientation.

In the longer term the strengthening of NGOs is undertaken with a larger purpose in view. BINGOS is based on the belief that NGOs will serve to reinforce democracy and to provide access to political and economic development processes to grass-roots populations. It is this purpose which legitimizes the intervention, and ultimately it is the economic and political development of these populations which will define the impact of the project. This evaluation also takes this long-term goal into account. The assessment of the project's effect on democratization and economic development can however be no more than preliminary at this early stage.

IV. Progress indicators

The BINGOS program is a three-year project which started in February, 1994. The following summary assessment of the project's progress through July, 1996 (29 of

Table 1: Characteristics of the ideal type of NGO

A. Prerequisites for selection for participation in BINGOS

- a not-for-profit philosophy
- a grass-roots constituency to which the organization provides services

B. Characteristics which BINGOS wishes to develop:

- modern administrative structure with professional, trained managers and a clear separation of powers between the executive and the directorate
 - rigorous application of management principles and procedures especially as regards money
 - demonstrated capacity to design effective programs in collaboration with its constituents and to raise funds to implement these
 - active links of collaboration and common cause with other NGOs, both national and international
 - access to national policy-makers and the will to represent the organization's constituency in those forums.
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36 months¹⁾ is based on targets defined in the project's logical framework and in the BINGOS workplan. Further activities planned between July 1996 and the normal end of the project (February 1997) are listed in section IV. B. below.

A. Progress to date

1. Participating NGOs: The project target is 20 NGOs. To date BINGOS has enlisted 33 NGOs; 10 of these have withdrawn or have been suspended from the program.

Because the agreement was back-dated from the signing date of May 1994, actual implementation of the project only goes back 26 months.

Achievement to date: 23 participating NGOs.

2. Training schedule: The project paper defines an extensive program of training on the following specific themes: long-range and institutional planning; accounting and financial management; project management, monitoring, backstopping, and evaluation; computer training.

Achievements to date: 15 training programs for key management personnel of all member NGOs. Representatives of every BINGOS NGO have participated in at least one training. Major themes covered are: organizational and financial management, the theory of NGOs, project design and proposal writing. Accountants from 4 NGOs received computer training.

3. Institutional support grants: The project paper calls for institutional support grants to 5-10 local NGOs annually.

Achievements to date: BINGOS has made 30 grants totalling \$120,557 to 21 member NGOs. In addition, \$15,340 was granted to a network of NGOs working on election monitoring.

4. Project development and funding: BINGOS is to establish a committee to review and recommend funding for sub-projects. 15-20 appropriate grass-roots projects will be funded annually by BINGOS. Following training, 15 NGOs should be able to secure project funding from non-BINGOS sources.

Achievements to date: NGOs are encouraged, as part of the training program, to design and submit a "microproject" proposal to BINGOS. A council of NGO representatives (le Conseil BINGOS) reviews the proposals and decides on funding. To date, the council has accepted 18 projects submitted by 15 BINGOS NGOs and 2 associated groups. Of these, BINGOS has funded 15 projects, ranging from \$3,000 to \$45,000, for a total of \$353,623. 3 projects totalling \$61,929 were funded by outside sources. At least 9 other NGOs have current projects with outside funding or projects submitted to other donors. Note: several NGOs have ongoing relationships with other donors which predate their association with BINGOS.

5. NGO advocacy: BINGOS is to encourage and develop NGOs' ability to act as intermediary between the grass-roots and government decision-makers, bringing grass-roots issues into the planning arena. Specifically, BINGOS should conduct at least 5 policy workshops and otherwise promote dialogue between member NGOs, policy-makers and grass-roots organizations.

Achievements to date: 1 policy workshop which drew 80

BINGOS and non-BINGOS participants. Given the criteria for joining BINGOS, virtually all member NGOs have either an advocacy or a grass-roots organizing function. BINGOS directly supported a network of NGOs working to prepare the recent elections and, through an umbrella grant, supports two NGOs which are working on decentralization and monitoring of the electoral process.

6. NGO collaboration: The project paper calls for BINGOS to support and encourage collaboration between NGOs, support and train NGO federations and groupings, and promote NGO advocacy groups. By project's end at least 10 local NGOs should be collaborating in program development or implementation. BINGOS is to sponsor a minimum of 10 internships or exchanges a year for NGO personnel.

Achievements to date: BINGOS has sponsored 13 exchange visits between members and with non-member NGOs. Three NGO associations have received some funds, and BINGOS has exchanged information with two others (CDD, CONGAB). 6 NGO federations or associations participated in the Pow Wow conference sponsored by BINGOS. In 10 documented cases, and probably a number of others, BINGOS NGOs have worked together on training, project design and evaluation. Representatives of the BINGOS 2 NGOs continue to meet on a regular basis since the end of their initial training sessions. BINGOS has not sponsored any internships for its members.

7. Umbrella grants: Africare is to identify and finance 2-3 US PVOs to implement programs with local NGOs.

Achievements to date: Three US PVOs now have programs financed under the umbrella grant component of BINGOS. VITA provides credit, loan funds and training to NGOs. The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies is training two local NGOs to gather and analyze electoral data. Population Services International has just signed an agreement to train NGOs in social marketing. At this time VITA is preparing to leave Benin as the government has not renewed its contract for management of its primary project, PADME.

B. Activities planned to end of project

1. Participating NGOs: A list of potential BINGOS 3 NGO candidates is being assembled but no new NGOs will be admitted if the project is to end on schedule. Suspended NGOs may be considered for reinstatement.
2. Training: A full schedule of training includes accountant and cashier training for the second group and a number of sessions for both groups: project funding, management,

monitoring and evaluation for program managers; secretarial and computer training for secretaries; personnel management and conflict resolution for executive directors; rapid rural appraisal, community outreach and social marketing.

3. Institutional support grants: These grants are considered on request under the BINGOS program which allows each NGO to apply each year for institutional support and income-generating activity grants.
4. Microproject funding and implementation: Microprojects submitted by BINGOS 2 NGOs will be reviewed in August. Progress of BINGOS 1 microprojects is now underway, and mid-term evaluations for BINGOS 2 microprojects will take place before the end of the BINGOS project.
5. Advocacy: Training in community outreach, a workshop on the NGO code of conduct and a conference on democracy and community organizations are planned.
6. Collaboration: Several interventions are planned including: sponsorship of NGO participation in the Family Planning Law International Conference in late 1996; inclusion of NGOs in evaluation of the projects of other BINGOS groups.
7. Umbrella grants: The Joint Center program is ongoing, and the essential part of the PSI program will take place during this period.

C. Assessment of progress

The effective period for project activities has been shortened by 3 months due to the back-dating of the start of project. As a consequence, a number of activities have been accelerated to be completed before the normal end-of-project date. This is the case with the training program, particularly for the BINGOS 2 group, and for the mid-term evaluation of the BINGOS 2 microprojects. The PSI umbrella grant program, which should take 12 months, will be completed in 8.

The final evaluation of the BINGOS 2 microprojects will not be realized at all under the current schedule. Neither will a training cycle on long-range organizational planning.

Taking May as the starting point, the project's main activities got underway quickly and have been executed at an impressive rate. The first group of NGOs was introduced to the program in September 1994. The first training workshop took place in October. Since trainings have been held at a pace close to one program a month. The first microprojects were funded before the end of the project's first year (February 1995).

Other activities either got a late start or have been slow to develop. Among program activities these include the umbrella grant agreements, especially the belated agreement with PSI. The project has simply not been able to implement a policy workshop program or to build up advocacy groups and NGO federations to the extent called for in the project proposal.

BINGOS has modified its program as it progresses. Because the basic training needs of the NGOs were greater than anticipated, the training program has been expanded. In contrast, the project's attempts to work with existing federations have met with little response.

The strategy and objectives for strengthening associations of NGOs were not as clearly defined in the project design as the strategy for working with individual NGOs. Because the current effort is not successful BINGOS staff is considering other initiatives with NGO networks which have organized around common interests or issues.

V. Impact of training and technical assistance on ultimate beneficiaries

A. Themes and activities of the training program

NGOs which participate in BINGOS must follow a training program which covers the following subjects:

1. Theory and principles of NGO management. The sequence includes sessions on organizational structure and separation of powers, the roles of key personnel, management style and public relations. The program is directed at NGO presidents at first, and subsequently to executive directors and members of the administrative council as well.
2. Technical training. Separate programs have been designed for executive directors in personnel management and conflict resolution; accountants in accounting and reporting; cashiers in the management of petty cash; and secretaries in secretarial skills and computer use.
3. Project design and management. The specific training sequence for program managers (*chargés de programme*) covers project design and the participatory method, feasibility studies, funding sources, project management, and evaluation.

Three principal themes define this training program:

1. Structural reform. NGOs are asked to institute a structural separation of executive and directorate powers, a clear

definition and respect for roles, a professional executive staff, rigor and transparency of procedures and a system of control.

2. Professionalism. Each NGO is to constitute a paid professional executive staff including, at a minimum, an executive director or program manager and an accountant. BINGOS provides skills training to this executive staff.
3. Organizational capacity to design, implement and manage development projects appropriate to the needs of a grass-roots constituency. This combines the technical skills of project design and management with the principles of participative methods and fund-raising.

To support this training BINGOS publishes reference manuals on topics which include: principles of organizational and financial management; project identification and implementation; and a guide to funding and assistance agencies. Project staff provides additional training follow-up during monitoring visits.

B. Impact of the management training program on the NGOs

NGOs which have been accepted into the BINGOS are expected to participate in the BINGOS training program and to apply the principles and procedures taught in the program. This is not always easy for an NGO. 9 of 33 NGOs - all from the BINGOS 1 admissions group - have been suspended from the project. Two of these suspensions have been due to dishonesty in the handling of BINGOS grants, and the other seven because an NGO has failed to participate in trainings and project meetings. One NGO has also withdrawn from BINGOS because the president could not accept the principle of separation of powers.

The NGOs which remain have all, nominally at least, absorbed the message of organizational restructuring and professionalism. With one exception all have effected the structural separation between a board of directors (*conseil administratif*) and the executive team. The institutional grant support grant program ensures that all participating NGOs can establish a permanent, paid, professional executive staff of at least two key persons: executive/program director and accountant. The NGOs with longer standing in the project - those of the BINGOS 1 group - have for the most part defined and filled these key positions. The BINGOS 2 NGOs are less advanced on this path. This group has not yet completed a full training cycle. The BINGOS 2 NGOs also tend to be newer and less well-established than those of the first group.

All the BINGOS 1 NGOs, whose accountants have gone through training, have instituted basic accounting procedures. Some of the larger and better-organized groups have gone further, preparing or instituting written financial and personnel

policies, systematic control mechanisms, and management of petty cash.

For comparison, the needs assessment of the BINGOS shows that in 1994 only 4 had any permanent personnel and 3 maintained an operational budget. Interviews with staff from non-BINGOS NGOs confirm that, as a whole, the procedures and principles introduced by BINGOS are not widely applied elsewhere.

NGOs readily accept the validity and utility of trained permanent personnel in well-defined roles and the application of management procedures - especially accounting. Respondents interviewed by the evaluation team claimed that both the separation of tasks and the application of management procedures made their work simpler and more efficient in the long run. The point was often made that systematic accounting, money-handling procedures and task definition tend to reduce tensions and potential sources of conflict.

NGO leaders have found the idea of separation of powers and roles more difficult to understand and accept. In more cases than not an NGO is the creation of a single individual or a small group of founders who are used to personal control of the organization. The separation of this control under pressure from BINGOS has taken a number of turns. By a slight margin, individual "founders" have chosen to take over the executive - and thus paid - leadership and relinquished the presidency, a position of control and policy-making. In the small sample of NGOs visited the evaluation team observed the following cases:

- * the founder promises to make the change but is dragging his feet (Projets Verts)
- * the founder/executive director does not accept the authority of the president he himself named (SOS VALDES). The conflict threatens the organization
- * the founder/director, found to be embezzling, is fired by the director she named (APFEM). The ex-director is trying to turn the board against the president to regain control of the organization. There is a good deal of support for her position among the presidents and directors of other BINGOS NGOs, who feel that the NGO owes its existence to her.

This is not an easy step to take, nor would it come naturally to most NGOs. Even in instituting separation most founders will try to keep some control over the choice and the person of the president. Still, there is evidence that the separation of powers, once accomplished, takes on a legitimacy of its own. In all the NGOs visited (except Projets Verts) the staff said that separation improved work efficiency and simplified organizational procedures. Two ex-BINGOS NGOs (MJRC, CERIDAA) made a point of saying that this was the major principle they have retained from BINGOS, and MJRC now applies separation even though the failure to do so was one of the issues that led

to its suspension.

In contrast, BINGOS' own progress indicators rate most NGOs low in this category. With the exception of ABPF, all the NGOs rate at or (more commonly) well below 50% on a 12-point scale. Further, the BINGOS 1 NGOs have made very little progress in two years while the BINGOS 2 group has moved more rapidly up the scale. The Progress Indicators scale measures the functional dimensions of separation - oversight and control power vested in the Board, control mechanisms, clear and separate job descriptions. The separation of powers may thus be more apparent than real, particularly among the BINGOS 1 NGOs, which tend to be more established and run by older leaders than the BINGOS group.

The effective separation of powers is clearly a key indicator of the impact which BINGOS is trying to achieve within the NGOs. The training, and the insistence of BINGOS on the principle, has stirred a debate about the issue. The NGOs are moving, in principle, from a form in which power and decision-making is combined in an individual or small group to an institution with a distribution of power and a system of checks and balances. The full separation of powers, as distinct from structural separation, between executive and directorate will be evidence that this has been achieved.

C. Impact of project design and management training

There is little question that the training in project design and in funding procedures has been valuable to the NGOs. The needs assessment study commissioned at the start of BINGOS shows that most NGOs had no real experience of designing and marketing a significant, unsolicited project prior to BINGOS. All had some experience implementing projects, usually within a partnership with an international agency or PVO (i.e. UNDP, GTZ), but there is no evidence of systematic training in project design or management. BINGOS has demystified the design and funding process for many NGOs, giving them skills which are vital to the roles which they are to fulfill in the elaboration and implementation of grass-roots development actions. NGOs both within and outside of BINGOS see this as one of the project's great contributions.

The ability to design and finance a project within the microproject program (or preferably with an outside source) is evidence that an NGO has acquired a life skill. In several cases an NGO has been able to go further and win funding for an original project from outside sources. It is too soon to speak of the impact of the project management training cycle, which has not yet been held, but the assessment of this would be along the same lines.

D. Assessment of the training component

The training programs are very well received and greatly appreciated by NGO participants. The training method, which stresses participation and hands-on study, appears to be particularly effective. During the evaluation several respondents said that there simply are no other comprehensive training programs, in either management issues or project design, being offered to NGOs in Benin at this time.

Participants raised relatively few criticisms of the training program. Occasionally one felt that the sessions are too short and intense. To many, the BINGOS staff does not provide enough follow-up in the NGOs once a training is over. Another comment was that the trainings are too standardized - that they should be adapted to the needs of different kinds of NGOs.

The training program to date can be described as a fine but unfinished effort. The end-of-project plan already anticipates completion of the project implementation cycle, as well as further technical training.

The end-of-project plan does *not* reflect sufficiently the fact that it is, in principle, the plan which prepares the departure of Africare from BINGOS. Most of the NGOs think of Africare as an international PVO partner which will always be with them. The training program should be amended to include themes which will specifically help the NGOs to survive after Africare - cost recovery and similar autofinancing strategies.

In the eventuality of a project extension, several planned topics could be addressed in greater detail, including:

1. long-range organizational planning
2. training of trainers
3. animation.

VI. Impact of efforts to promote collaboration

The BINGOS Project Proposal identifies the lack of collaboration between NGOs as one of the major weaknesses of the NGO movement in Benin. The dimensions of collaboration include exchanges and direct cooperation between individual NGOs, which will allow groups to share expertise and resources; linkage with foreign NGOs, which will bring new technical and financial resources to local NGOs; and association or federation, which will give NGOs a voice in the national arena. At the time the project was proposed, NGOs were more likely to see each other as potential competitors and to view national NGO federations with suspicion - a situation which still prevails today.

BINGOS has an interest in promoting both the habit and the structures of collaboration, as these are the mechanisms which will ensure the long-term evolution of the member NGOs. The project proposal defines a number of actions by which the project can intervene in this domain. These include:

1. facilitation and promotion of collaboration on project implementation within BINGOS
2. sponsorship of internships and exchanges for NGO personnel
3. support and training to NGO federations and groupings
4. promotion of NGO advocacy groupings for grass-roots issues
5. funding of grants to initiate joint programs between American PVOs and local NGOs.

A. Collaboration within BINGOS

BINGOS is a natural forum for exchanges between participant NGOs. The NGOs in BINGOS know each other and have in common the philosophy and management methods promoted by the project. The BINGOS staff has sponsored exchanges, but many cases of collaboration and exchange have taken place without project sponsorship. Some of the larger and more assertive NGOs (CBDIBA, GRABS, APRETECTRA, for example) have taken on the role of providing technical assistance and even training to other groups. Our interviews show that smaller, less experienced groups such as ASPPIP and REPFED also look to older NGOs for project ideas and technical advice.

Africare has promoted the idea of NGO "ownership" of the project. Participants help set priorities and programs for training sessions, meetings and workshops. The BINGOS Council is constituted as an advisory group to evaluate microproject proposals and to review other issues such as suspension of groups from the project. BINGOS also publishes a newsletter which is written and edited by NGO members. All these factors have contributed to a sense of affiliation and community which is evident in all the NGO representatives we interviewed.

B. The BINGOS Council

The BINGOS Council draws mixed reviews from BINGOS members. It is the only setting in which NGOs participate formally in the decision process. Yet, despite the Africare concept of NGO ownership of the project, the Council has only a very strictly limited advisory role.

A number of respondents find this role to be insufficient. Current Council members feel that the Council is not kept

informed by Africare and that their influence is weak. Some, both on the Council and off, have suggested that the Council be given a larger advisory role and even decision power over the microproject fund. Others have suggested that the Council be groomed to take over leadership of BINGOS after Africare's participation ends. One role proposed for the Council was referee in suspension and reinstatement cases.

Others are far more cautious about the Council, its motives and those of individual members. A third group simply said they were not informed of what the Council did, if anything.

BINGOS may yet become the basis for a formal association or federation, but it is too soon for that now. The project could start to build toward that end in a number of ways. One tactic would be to promote collaboration between individual groups by making microproject money available for joint projects. Another might be to bring representatives of BINGOS groups within a specific zone together to discuss possible subregional projects or actions to reinforce their local activities. Similar meetings, and possibly projects, could be developed with NGOs that have a common sectoral interest.

One way to move in this direction would be to expand the powers and responsibilities of the BINGOS Council. The Council might be given some wider advisory role, possibly along the lines of a blue-ribbon study committee. A suitable role would be fielding and making a first assessment of bids to be reinstated into BINGOS. The Council can represent member NGOs in the process of planning the last year of the project and possible future phases.

The BINGOS Council should also be involved in the preparation for the end of the project and decisions on what to make of BINGOS structure after the project. Participant NGOs need some education and guidance about the imminent or eventual end of the project, and the Council can plan and organize this. The Council could be given some initial impetus and training in coalition-building, if the prospect of a more formal structure associating BINGOS NGOs looks promising. In the last case the Council must be made more representative; the current arrangement, including the election process, certainly favors the few highly visible, Cotonou-based leaders who are well-known and can easily attend meetings.

At the very least Africare should associate the Council to the effort to prepare BINGOS for the departure of Africare. The Council can ensure that member groups understand that this will happen, possibly even imminently, and can start a discussion on the future of BINGOS. Eventually, the Council will help prepare a transition plan.

C. Umbrella grant cooperation

Africare has signed umbrella grant agreements with three U.S. NGOs to complete this component of the project:

1. VITA provides credit and credit management training to NGOs for projects and, more recently, as loan funds for NGO microcredit projects. The program, begun in March 1995, was slow to get going and has made 7 loans totalling over \$7,000 to 7 NGOs (3 from BINGOS) by July 1996. This program is now threatened with imminent closure as VITA's contract to manage the parent PADME loan program has not been renewed by the Government of Benin.
2. The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies provides research training to two local NGOs: an electoral research group and one which promotes decentralization of the electoral process. The program has also been slow to show results. Joint Center does not have a permanent presence in Benin and manages this project through periodic visits of key staff persons based in the U.S. The grant proposal holds out the possibility of a long-term association between the Joint Center and its partner NGOs if suitable terms of reference are written during the umbrella grant phase.
3. PSI has just signed an agreement to train NGOs in social marketing, but is still reviewing and selecting NGO partners.

The umbrella agreements allow BINGOS with specific interests to draw on the expertise of American organizations with technical specialization that Africare cannot provide. The Joint Center grant also gives BINGOS a link to a specialized type of NGO working in a field relevant to the objectives of the project - democratization - but which BINGOS has not been able to attract with its overall program. The PSI and VITA collaborations are of great interest to the BINGOS NGOs because the services they offer are directly relevant to the NGOs' needs.

The work of the Joint Center and its partner NGOs accords well with the governance dimension of BINGOS, as defined in the Project Proposal, but is not clearly integrated with the work BINGOS does with the rest of the project NGOs. This is in part because BINGOS has not been able to mount an effective program with other advocacy NGOs in the political arena, so that there are few NGOs in BINGOS whose interests and priorities overlap with those of the Joint Center NGOs. The civic training, advocacy and research skills which the Joint Center NGOs are developing are also relevant to the rest of BINGOS, and it would be interesting to develop a plan in which CAO and GRAPAD are used to train and to evaluate other groups.

The mechanism by which the umbrella grant was publicized, and the grantees selected, is not clear. According to the country representative, Africare first sought partners among the U.S. NGOs operating in Benin and then published an article in Monday Developments, a U.S. journal for NGOs. The pool of U.S. PVOs in Benin was (and still is) very small, so that only VITA was identified at first. No viable candidates came from the responses to the article, so Joint Center was recruited by the Africare home office. PSI was identified and approached through informal contacts between the Africare and PSI country representatives. In light of the experience to date Africare should reassess the umbrella grant program to decide whether this approach is the best way to guarantee that local NGOs have access to international partners and specialized technical assistance.

The umbrella grant was an idea that looked promising but which, so far, has produced disappointing results. The program was meant to allow Africare to promote links between local NGOs and international PVOs which could provide technical expertise and long-term assistance. The three grants under BINGOS are strong on the technical assistance dimension but uncertain on the possibility of a long-term relationship.

The terms of the umbrella grant should be modified to allow Africare to work with non-PVO partners such as PADME if that is appropriate. If the objective of building linkages to international PVOs is maintained, then Africare (both in Benin and in Washington) will have to make a concerted effort to identify and recruit partners which meet the specific technical needs of the NGOs. The real need of most of the NGOs is a partner, or several, which can fund a range of general development efforts in all fields. Several of the larger and better-organized NGOs already have relations with partners of this sort.

Insofar as the objective is to give the NGOs access to a wider range of technical expertise, then the money set aside for the umbrella project might better be used to simply buy this expertise for them. This could be drawn from a number of sources: consultants, the growing number of non-profit or commercial training centers in Africa, international agencies, even from exchanges with other NGOs and with the local private sector. It would also be appropriate, within the philosophy of the project, for Africare to coach an NGO or a group of them in the identification and approach to an international PVO that could provide appropriate technical support.

D. Promotion of local NGO associations and other inter-NGO collaboration

Outside the confines of BINGOS the project has had little success in promoting regional or national NGO federations and has

essentially abandoned the effort. BINGOS supported the Réseau pour les Elections Pacifiques et Transparentes, an association of NGOs which promotes democracy, with an institutional development grant. The Réseau is a rare example of NGOs with little else in common coming together for a specific advocacy project. The experience does not, however, appear to have been extended to other actions.

BINGOS itself may eventually become the basis of one or several associations. As noted above (Section V.A), there are possible actions the project could take to promote this without actually trying to create such an association now.

E. Assessment of efforts to promote collaboration

The greatest contribution by the project to collaboration between NGOs has been the BINGOS program itself. The whole orientation of this program, from the trainings to the inclusion of NGO representatives in microproject evaluations, has helped NGOs to overcome the suspicion they often feel for one another and to see the advantages of exchange and collaboration. With the technical training, this will probably be the greatest legacy of BINGOS if the project ends on schedule.

It is far too soon to think of trying to convert this solidarity into a formal federation, but this is a possibility for the long term. In the immediate, Africare may try to move BINGOS in this direction by giving somewhat more responsibility to the BINGOS Council, possibly in formulating a plan for the future of the BINGOS grouping. If the project is funded for a second phase, one of the activities of that phase should be the coaching of veteran BINGOS NGOs in forming associations or federations, as these collaborative structures are desperately needed in Benin.

BINGOS has a mandate to try to promote and strengthen existing NGO federations, but conditions do not seem conducive to this. NGOs seem suspicious of each other and see others as competitors. The project has supported at least one association which formed around a special interest - free and fair elections. BINGOS has, correctly, given up most of its attempts to support existing federations. It may, in this or a future phase, want to explore the possibility of encouraging the emergence of associations among the BINGOS groups.

The umbrella grant component has yet to prove its worth in the larger context of the project. One collaboration is somewhat removed from the main constituency of the project, another is closing almost as it begins, and the third has yet to start activities. The grants have served as a venue for transfer of technology and some resources to local NGOs. It is less certain that the grants lead to long-term associations between

international and local NGOs, or that such associations will serve more than just a few specialized NGOs. If the purpose of these grants is primarily to facilitate technology transfer, then the terms of the grant should be loosened to allow Africare to support collaboration with any partner that can accomplish this (i.e., PADME). If the main purpose is to build relationships with international PVOs that will ensure long-term support for local groups, then Africare in Benin and especially in the U.S. needs to make a more concerted and directed effort to identify these partners.

VII. Impact of the project on democratization and governance

Promotion of democracy and governance is the goal of the BINGOS project. It is then the anticipated and desired cumulative outcome of all the effects and impact of project actions in all domains.

All BINGOS interventions are designed to contribute some dimension to the strengthening of democratization and governance, although not all actions directly address these issues. Alongside the principles of institutional competence and rationality the training program promotes organizational values of service, participation and openness (Table 2).

The theory underlying the project assigns the NGO three potential roles in strengthening governance and democracy:

1. Governance micro-unit. The ideal type of NGO becomes a laboratory of democracy in which a representative general assembly elects a board to direct the executive which manages the organization
2. Collector and concentrator of the popular voice at the grass-roots.
3. Communication channel and advocate, carrying the people's voice to decision-makers and information back down to the grass-roots.

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Table 2: Expected contribution of NGO training to democracy and governance

Action	Contribution
Management training for NGOs	<p>Strengthening organizational ability to provide services and to promote the interests of members and constituents</p> <p>Introduction and application of democratic principles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. transparency of policy-making, participation in decision-making and control processes2. separation of powers and internal controls3. Membership access and participation in decision-making and control processes
Project design training for NGOs	<p>Strengthening organizational ability to initiate and execute actions for and with constituents</p> <p>Promotion of participatory and constituent-responsive project and program definition:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Identification of needs and priorities in collaboration with constituent groups2. Systematic and public monitoring and evaluation of actions3. Participatory evaluation and constituent-responsive criteria

How well is BINGOS promoting these roles? Much of the project's effort has gone toward strengthening the institutional competence of the participating NGOs. This competence is a necessary but not sufficient condition for NGOs to assume their place in the democratization and governance process. As noted above, the project's technical training programs have been successful while NGOs have not so readily taken to actions designed to promote internal democratization and advocacy.

Many BINGOS NGOs do not understand or accept the principle of internal democratization. Effective separation of powers is one issue. Organizations also differ widely in their membership and their constituent assemblies. A group such as MJCD may have an effective system of power-separation and controls, and yet they restrict access to the process to a small group of founding members. APRETECTRA explicitly excludes the grass-roots associations with which it works from membership in the NGO, while REPFED includes these groups in its general assemblies.

Even in the most inclusive of NGOs, real decision power may be reserved to a limited group of "founding members". This group is generally quite different - in age, class, education and other social factors - from the grass-roots constituents of the organization. The founding members may have an agenda - in some cases to create jobs for themselves or their colleagues. They often also have a sense of ownership of the NGO, and a greater mastery of the politics of development and of organizational decision-making than do the representatives of constituent groups. Interviews indicate that representatives of grass-roots groups also feel uncertain of their role in NGO general assemblies, and may be reticent to press their agenda or challenge that of another, better-established group.

BINGOS has, to date, paid little attention to these questions of inclusiveness and participation within the NGOs. These principles are important to the philosophy of the project, and vital to the goal of promoting democracy. BINGOS should study the politics of decision-making and control within NGOs, and particularly the structure and dynamics of the membership and the general assembly, with an eye to promoting greater democracy in this area. This would be a venue for integrating the work of the Joint Center and its partner NGOs - GRAPAD, CAO - into the rest of the project in a concrete and practical way.

Most NGOs already work with and promote grass-roots associations. The association is a step toward concentrating grass-roots voices, even though neither the NGO nor the association probably has politics on their mind. BINGOS contributes to a process of democratization by giving the NGO skills and material support to bring associations together. There is a governance component if and when the association sets up a project-management structure.

There seems to be little that BINGOS can do, at the level of the NGOs themselves, to stimulate an advocacy role. Many participating NGOs already have an advocacy orientation. Those with a more traditional development orientation quite reasonably believe that their constituents' priority is funding and technical assistance for projects. This is an advocacy role in its own right, and no doubt the most valuable service which an

NGO can perform at this time.

Advocacy with political decision-makers seems beyond their reach to many NGOs, which are generally local groups with limited resources. To date, federations and associations have not proved to be viable forces for advocacy. BINGOS could make a contribution by identifying venues for NGO-government interaction which are accessible to individual NGOs - perhaps at the prefecture or sous-prefecture level - and facilitating conferences at these levels.

Several of BINGOS other actions are more directly aimed at governance and democracy issues. The components are:

1. The Joint Center umbrella grant: the most important action specifically directed at governance/democratization issues supports the training in research methods of two local NGOs: GRAPAD, whose mission is to gather and publish electoral information, and CAO, which promotes voter education. Both groups are involved in studies, but no substantive output has yet appeared.
2. Support for the Réseau for Free and Fair Elections: the Réseau is an association of NGOs, including several from BINGOS, which monitors elections and publicly advocates freedom and fairness in electoral processes. BINGOS support was for material support to the organization in its attempt to become a permanent institution, and for training of poll-watchers.

Both these initiatives are, in principle, excellent examples of direct NGO action in governance and democratization processes. In terms of the rest of the BINGOS project, the Joint Center action is somewhat aloof and disconnected, while the Réseau has to date only been active at election time.

In each case it appears that there would be some value in trying to link the organizations involved, if possible, to other facets of the BINGOS project. One suggestion, using Joint Center NGO research skills to analyze NGO general assembly processes, was mentioned above. Both CAO and the Réseau also seem to have excellent networking skills for advocacy which could be tapped for a training program or technical assistance for interested NGOs. The fact that the Réseau has a number of BINGOS members would make it an ideal starting point for exploring other advocacy issues and bases for networking (health-oriented NGOs, for example).

The POW-WOW on the NGO in Benin brought together NGO leaders, donor agencies, government representatives and a number of others in a major four-day conference in August, 1995. The conference was apparently the biggest event of its kind yet held

in Benin, and stimulated a vigorous exchange of ideas and information among NGOs as well as between the different groups present. The impact is impossible to measure, unless to say that a year later it comes up frequently in conversations about the NGO movement in Benin. The initiative of bringing together the different actors in the ONG world for a round-table discussion was excellent and, by all evidence, of use to a great number of people. Two more major conferences, perhaps not on the same scale, are scheduled for later this year - a workshop on the NGO Code of Conduct and a conference on community organizations and democracy.

The main failure of the project to date has been its attempts to promote NGO federations and advocacy networks. These are important enough so that BINGOS should rethink its strategy and make a renewed and more concerted effort. This would be, along with the extension of the project into the north, a logical basis for a second phase of BINGOS. Some possible approaches include:

1. experimentation, with small groups from within BINGOS, with different bases and forms of association - i.e. subregional, sectoral, advocacy issues.
2. analysis of existing federations to identify what services they can offer to NGOs, what objectives NGOs look for, and where existing federations fall short, using this information to design a federation
3. experimentation with a strategy of professionalization and structural reform of a federation similar to the BINGOS NGO model

VIII. Africare's management capacities and effectiveness

The consensus of the evaluators is that Africare has fielded an exceptionally strong team for the execution of the project. From the record and from interviews with both Africare and NGO staff, it is evident that the Africare team (both present and past) has been professionally competent, committed to the project and responsive to the needs and suggestions of various partners. It is worth noting that the NGO representatives interviewed, including some members of groups suspended from BINGOS, generally spoke well of the openness and responsiveness of the BINGOS staff.

BINGOS has not been an easy project to implement. Africare, which is new to Benin, has been learning the country almost at the same time it has been executing a project for which there are few precedents. BINGOS is also, essentially, a five-year project which has been scaled back to three (and then cut back again).

With a short time frame and a dense program, activities have been scheduled at a rapid pace and some have been scaled back. Overall, the project has succeeded in producing a consistently high quality of services. One aspect, which the evaluation team especially appreciated, is the excellent documentation which has been maintained.

Several difficulties have been dealt with effectively and smoothly. These include recovery from the slow start of the project, which was still evident at the end of 1994. The departure of the training coordinator, though painful, was handled fairly; as were two other staff dismissals. Africare has been very conscious that it serves as an organizational role model to the NGOs, and so must be seen to act in a fair but decisive way.

Africare has responded well to justified criticism, as demonstrated by the Progress Indicator system produced in response to a USAID critique. The project has also been self-correcting. This can be seen in the selection of the BINGOS 2 group: the criteria for selection were clearly better conceived than those of the BINGOS 1 group, and Africare did not repeat the error of choosing too many NGOs.

There are some areas which still need improvement. The criteria or procedures for selection of partners are not yet well defined, nor is it clear how the pool of candidates was chosen. This is equally true for BINGOS NGOs and for the umbrella grant partners. A related criticism is that Africare/BINGOS has not prepared a plan and criteria for eventually changing an NGO's status within the project, or graduating an organization from the program.

To the credit of the BINGOS staff, the participating NGOs had relatively few criticisms. The following issues were raised by several groups.

Some NGOs have called Africare to task for being abrupt or incommunicative. Several groups which have been suspended feel that they were not given sufficient warning of the decision, nor enough time to respond and to try to correct the causes of suspension. Some of these groups would like to be considered for re-entry but say that they are not sure how to go about this, or if they even can. NGOs which have applied to BINGOS but have not been admitted say that they have not been told why they were rejected, or even the current status of their application. NGOs also feel that the project does not always explain why microproject proposals are rejected, or what needs to be done to make the proposals acceptable.

Another critique is that Africare does not do enough follow-up and monitoring work in the field. Respondents say that staff

does not come frequently enough to help NGOs perfect their skills. Further, when Africare does come it is too often without warning and without declaring their mission, which disturbs many. As the project progresses, monitoring of microprojects and technical assistance adds further demands to staff time already occupied by the training program. If resources are stretched, the project should perhaps add personnel.

The evaluation team feels, finally, that the project staff should develop contingency plans for a number of possible futures. If USAID does not provide further funding for the project, will BINGOS end? Are there other sources of funding, and what are they? Can the BINGOS structure be left behind, and how would it function? A number of such strategic planning issues hang over the project in the last year of its current phase, and we anticipate that the Africare-Benin staff will be addressing these over the next year.

IX. Conclusions and recommendations

A. General conclusions

1. The BINGOS project is, overall, a project which has made a significant contribution to the development of Benin
2. The central component of the project was well conceived and has been executed effectively. This is the training, institutional assistance and microproject component which is directed to the participant NGOs. This comprehensive approach is unique to BINGOS and has been very well received by most NGOs. In a coherent program the project offers NGOs several valuable organizational skills which include: theory of the NGO, management principles, technical skills, and the capacity to design and implement a significant project.
3. Other components of the project were not so clearly conceived and designed. They have also been less successful in execution. This includes, notably, the umbrella grant program and the various plans to work with NGO federations and advocacy groups. Yet, the idea of strengthening the NGOs by linking them to networks and external allies is too logical to abandon too easily.
4. The project now needs to consider and plan for its future(s). Eventually, and maybe quite soon, Africare's role in BINGOS will end. Alternatively, there may be a second phase of the project. Project staff must start preparing scenarios and concrete programs for both eventualities.

B. Recommendations

1. The current project is somewhat cramped in its current schedule and would make excellent use of a seven month extension, which would be no-cost, to spread out and add to its training program and to complete evaluations
2. International donors are increasingly turning to NGOs as agents for development in Africa. The BINGOS project is a well thought-through design for training NGOs to perform this role effectively, and it deserves to be considered as a model for adaptation to other settings
3. By the same logic, this project which has been effective in the south of Benin should be extended to the rest of the country
4. Staff, in consultation with the NGOs (possibly through the BINGOS Council) must start to plan for futures with and without Africare. Key questions: preparing NGOs for the inevitable withdrawal of Africare; procedures and criteria for graduating NGOs from the program; how and if to institutionalize BINGOS; priorities and strategies for a second phase of the project.
5. Several possibilities exist for institutionalizing BINGOS which include: strengthening the BINGOS Council to become the governing board of a new federation; grooming a national NGO partner to take over Africare's role; formalizing collaborative relations within BINGOS into associations; negotiating BINGOS' entry into one of the existing national federations. BINGOS staff should analyze the situation to see which, if any, is feasible and likely to be successful.

C. Project design and program - conclusions

1. The project's training themes - professionalism, management, institutional theory, and project planning - have been well-received and accepted by NGOs. Other NGOs and international PVOs respect the BINGOS program and its results, and many now themselves look to the BINGOS model for their own restructuring and training programs. BINGOS is still the only comprehensive training program focusing on NGO management issues, which is clearly a real and a felt need of Benin NGOs.
2. Among the training modules, NGOs have found it easiest to apply the practical themes of management techniques and project design. The more theory-driven theme of separation of power and roles requires a real change of outlook which runs against the grain of the NGOs' history and perhaps of

Benin culture. Application of these this theme has been tentative and reluctant, and full acceptance is now yet achieved.

3. The umbrella grant system has not been successful and is not the best mechanism for achieving its stated goals: expanding the NGOs' access to technical expertise, and stimulating long-term relations between NGOs and international PVOs.
4. The program to support and develop federations and associations of NGOs was not successful. This component of the project was not as carefully designed as the training component.
5. The project has a mandate to develop links and communication between NGOs and government decision-makers. BINGOS has developed no real strategy to do this.
7. The project has engaged in a few specific actions in the domains of democratization and governance, but has not really linked these actions or these themes to the rest of the program in any concrete fashion.

D. Project design and program - recommendations

1. The current training program has not yet been completed, as noted above, and needs to address more directly the issues of NGO survival after Africare. In the longer term, future training needs will probably shift away from management themes and toward more technical sectoral training.
2. The separation of powers and structural reform of NGOs are true governance issues. The project needs to pay more attention to the membership of the NGOs and their role in the direction of the organization. Are there actions which can promote democratization at this level? This would be a venue for bringing the Joint Center and its partner NGOs into the larger BINGOS program. The training program should incorporate a series of workshops and reflections on the separation of powers and theory of organizations for different groups within the NGO structure.
3. The umbrella grant fund can be replaced with a fund for technical consultants, specific technical training abroad and promotion of collaboration with a wider range of local partners, including the private sector and such government agencies as PADME. Local partners can include other international PVOs and donors and their partner NGOs.
4. BINGOS staff should re-examine the efforts to promote associations of NGOs and try to design a stronger program.

The BINGOS environment is a venue to experiment with different models of association including sectoral, subregional, common interest/advocacy, and possibly groups anchored by some of the larger and more successful NGOs such as CBDIBA. BINGOS can also encourage and make funds available for collaborative microprojects between NGOs.

5. Links between NGOs and the government need to be developed at levels closer to the NGOs. BINGOS should explore strategies for building relations between these actors in the Prefectures, which seem to be the working level where collaboration can be most direct and effective.
6. The project should shift some of the responsibility for training to its older and more advanced NGOs as the program advances. Teaching will consolidate the themes in the minds of NGO members and may be particularly useful in bringing them to fully understand theoretical elements.

E. Practical recommendations and lessons learned

1. Two years is a very short time to make an impact in a project of this kind and to expect to see the evidence. The project as designed is optimistic and ambitious, especially considering the inevitable learning curve. A project of this sort in the future should be designed over a five or six year schedule to allow full implementation of the program and enough time to follow up with the NGOs before weaning them from the project.
2. Implementation of the project has stretched the resources of Africare. A future project of this kind should severely limit the number of participating NGOs or plan for a larger staff.
3. The original project was overambitious both in what it proposed to do in three years and in its attempts to link institution-building to democratization. In fact, the project has concentrated its efforts on institution-building and left governance/democratization issues for a later stage. Future project design, in Benin or elsewhere, should consider that this is a realistic sequence and build it into the design.
4. Any future project of this kind should have a clear program from the beginning for preparing participants for the time when the project ends. Also, the project should have a strategy for graduating participants from the program.
5. The initial selection of NGOs was too inclusive. Africare should set stricter and better-defined criteria for selection in a future project of this kind. The project may

yet want to select a smaller group with which to continue work from among the participating NGOs which are most committed to internal democracy, participation and advocacy.

ANNEX 1 - Methodology

The methodology of the evaluation emphasized a broad-ranging qualitative assessment rather than a rigorously quantitative approach. There are several reasons why this was appropriate. As a practical matter there was not enough time to design and administer an adequate survey, and the project in any case does not have a strong baseline study to provide comparative data.

More important is the fact that an inductive and qualitative approach is more appropriate to the situation and to the purposes of the evaluation. The concepts by which BINGOS' impact will be measured - professionalism and democratization - are complex and subject to cultural interpretation. The NGOs participating in BINGOS represent a wide range of cases which differ from one another in their purpose and field of action, in experience and sophistication, in size, resources, commitment and a host of other factors. Nor have they all had the same degree of exposure to the influence of BINGOS. In these circumstances the interpretation of the project's impact in different settings must necessarily take into account case specific indicators and qualitative interpretation of a range of evidence.

There are a certain number of measurable indicators which are appropriate to this assessment. These include the project status indicators, reviewed in section III below, which show the project's achievements in relation to targets set in the project paper and in workplans. These indicators were drawn from documents and interviews with BINGOS staff.

Another source of data is the project's own monitoring and evaluation instruments. Somewhat belatedly (April 1996) BINGOS established a set of indicators of NGO progress toward project objectives which will be measured systematically and reported each semester. These include readily measurable indicators (i.e., "all staff members have written job descriptions") and others which require a qualitative assessment from the BINGOS staff member who fills out the questionnaire (for example, a question ranking the NGO staff on a scale of incompetent to highly competent). Detailed and systematic, the progress indicators already provide a useful basis for comparing the development of NGOs and will eventually trace the path of individual NGOs toward project objectives.

The evaluation teams also used a simple checklist, while interviewing NGO staff, to verify the NGO's application of some of the fundamental procedures taught by BINGOS (separation of power, accounting procedures, etc.) The purpose of this checklist, more rapid appraisal than data collection, was to verify information received from BINGOS and to lead the interview to questions about the respondent's view of BINGOS' innovations. The checklist also served as a point of comparison between BINGOS

and non-BINGOS NGOs.

Interviews with the staff of NGOs followed a preset questionnaire which listed a number of key issues of importance to the evaluation. The purpose of this questionnaire was, again, more to give some structure and consistency to the interviews by both field teams than to elicit specific data. Interviewers were expected and encouraged to follow up on questions which were appropriate to a given NGO and to get more in-depth information.

No specific questionnaire was prepared for other individuals or groups interviewed by the evaluation team. These included members of village associations, BINGOS staff, members of the BINGOS Council, and government officials.

ANNEX 2: Persons interviewed

We thank the following persons for taking the time to help us in the evaluation:

Daniel Gerber	Africare Country Representative
Scott Wittstruck	BINGOS Project Coordinator
David Koutangni	BINGOS Assistant Project Coordinator
Eric Sossouhounto	Africare Grass Roots Projects Coordinator
Chantal Amegan	BINGOS Microproject Administrator
Bouraima Tidjani	BINGOS Training Coordinator
Comlan Hospice Seclonde	- ORDH President
Gervais Gandji	ORDH Executive Director
Didè Stéphanie	APFEM Program Officer
Acakpovi Dieudonné	APRETECTRA Accountant
Fado Samuel	APRETECTRA Secretary
Daniel Houndekindo	APRETECTRA President
Djoklé Etienne	CERIDAA
Folly Sylvain	AAFED President
Agossévi Jacob	AVPN President
Dansi Felix	REPFED Program Officer
Clothilde Dansiga	REPFED Executive Director
Awédé Euloge	MJRC President
Sèdégan Pierre	Projets Verts President
Amassé Léon	SOS-Valdes President
Dr Antoinette Houenou	SOS-Valdes Coordinator
Denadi Christophe	GRABS Executive Director
Djagba Faustin	MJCD Executive Director
Zinsou Nicholas	MJCD Financial Officer
Codjia Berthe	MJCD Administrator
Tobossi Armand	ABPF Executive Director
Azokly René	VITA/PADME Assistant Director
Ross Croulet	VITA/PADME Director
Steve Lutterbeck	PSI Country Representative
Ludolphe Gbaguidi	Ministry of Plan
Boras Behanzin	ALDIPE Executive Director
Emmanuel Sossou	ASPPIP President
Ahouedehou Frédéric	ASPPIP Executive Director
Théonas Mossonou	CAO Administrator
Emmanuel Gahou	GRAPAD Executive Director

and representatives and members of the following NGOs:

APFEM (village association)	SURVIE
REPFED (village association)	CBDIBA
GRAPAS	OSSD
AVOTRIDEB	Village association of Logossowidji.



Africare

BENIN

B. P. 01-3142 - COTONOU

ADDENDUM TO EVALUATION

FROM: Dan Gerber, Country Representative *DG*
Scott Wittstruck, BINGOS Project Coordinator *J.S.W.*

DATE: September 30, 1996

Overall we agree with the general conclusions and recommendations of the BINGOS project evaluation dated September 15, 1996. Nevertheless, we would like to cite our disagreements with the evaluators' comments on a number of significant points, and to clarify others. These are:

- 1) Disagree with point 5 of the Executive Summary. In our opinion, results have not been disappointing to the NGOs who have been partners with VITA, Joint Center or PSI. The text does not demonstrate how the conclusion that this component is expensive or disappointing was determined.
- 2) Disagree with underlying assumption of point 7 of the Executive Summary. Cost-recovery and auto-financing strategies have been constant themes from day one of BINGOS. BINGOS is primarily a training project. If BINGOS ended tomorrow (which we hope it doesn't) the vast majority of NGOs in our program could easily survive. They have other sources of financing and are not dependent on us for their existence. We picked NGOs to join BINGOS who already existed and who had some track record. We purposefully have kept institutional support grants low (average \$4,000 per year per NGO), we have encouraged NGOs to find other partners, and we have encouraged and financed NGO income-generating activities. Looking at the 13 BINGOS Group 1 NGOs still in the program, only for one NGO could a case be made that they are dependent on us for their existence. All the others should have no problem surviving without our financial support. Most want and could use additional training to improve their organizations' effectiveness. Our BINGOS partners existed before us and we have strived throughout the program to improve their competencies without creating a financial dependence on Africare.

3) Disagree with statement made in point 9 of the Executive Summary that not all NGOs are represented in the BINGOS Advisory Council. Our democratic procedures for electing Advisory Council members has ensured that all NGOs are represented. Four members come from Group 1 and two members from Group 2. One half are Presidents of their NGOs, thus representing the "directorate" or orientation branch of the organization. The other half are either Executive Directors or Program Officers, thus representing the "executive" branch. The members were nominated by the NGOs and elected by the member NGOs. Those elected include 2 (out of 6) from NGOs whose offices are headquartered outside of Cotonou (ALDIPE in Abomey, Zou and CBDIBA in Bohicon, Zou).

4) In Section V. D. ("Assessment of the Training Component"), we question the statement regarding the end-of-project plan. Since we viewed the BINGOS Project as a multi-year effort (this being the first phase), we have not concentrated on developing an end-of-project plan as such since we assumed that Africare would not pack up shop in 3 years. On the other hand, we have emphasized to all NGOs that they need a variety of partners and varied sources of funding to decrease their dependence on us or any one partner. Auto-financing strategies have been discussed with our partners. The fact that we should not be considered a long term funding source has been explained numerous times to all our BINGOS partners.

5) In Section VI. C. 1., fortunately statements regarding VITA's imminent closure in Benin and disassociation with PADME were premature and exaggerated. In all likelihood PADME will become an NGO and VITA intends continuing their presence in Benin working with PADME and in other programming areas. VITA has assured us that they will be able to continue implementation of their umbrella grant.

6) In Section VI. C. 2., we disagree with the statement that the Joint Center's research training has not shown results. As described in the proposal, we wanted to give specialized training regarding research, opinion polling etc. to one or more local partners. We didn't expect them to have very many partners in this. Joint Center has been making progress in this technical training and Africare is not disappointed with the results to date. Nor do we believe that Joint Center's local partners are disappointed.

7) In Section VI. C., the umbrella grant mechanism is much clearer than the evaluators state. We received a number of proposals from US PVOs based in Benin as well as others interested in working in Benin. Each proposal was reviewed with the thought of whether the activity proposed would bring something valuable and unique for our partners and whether there was a possibility of fostering a long-term partnership with local NGOs. The first NGO identified was the Joint Center. They were

identified based on meeting the criteria for selection as described in the original BINGOS project proposal (see page 29 of the proposal - Umbrella Grants). The BINGOS proposal directly indicated the need and potential of associating a PVO with polling experience with one or more of our local partners. The text of the proposal also states "Africare will contact a number of American-based PVOs who could provide expertise for the BINGOS program to determine their potential interest."

The focus was first on US PVOs because we thought that they could more easily comply with our accounting methods and have more familiarity with USAID regulations. Additionally we knew there were a number of very qualified American PVOs who could help the program.

The article published in InterAction's Monday Developments was mentioned to the evaluation team as **an example** of how we got other American PVOs to know about this funding possibility.

Because the funding available for the umbrella grants was relatively small, it has made it difficult for an NGO not already active in Benin to propose an activity which they could effectively implement.

8) In Section VIII., we disagree with the statement regarding lack of clarity in criteria for selection of partners. The method by which NGOs were selected for both Group 1 and 2 have been clearly explained in the project reports and the Baseline Study (part 1). Also see Memo dated August 10, 1995 entitled "SELECTION PROCESS - BINGOS 2" which is attached to the 6th quarterly progress report dated October 12, 1995.

9) In Section VIII., we disagree that some NGOs are not told why micro-projects are rejected. After the proposals have been reviewed we sit down with the NGO programming representative(s) to discuss proposed modifications, what is needed to make the proposals acceptable or why we rejected the proposal. These meetings are held for all project proposals developed through the BINGOS project.