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Memorandum

Date: May 14, 1997

To: Juan Méndez

From: 
Stephen Cox, Michael Shifter

About: Our final report

We are pleased to present to you and your colleagues the attached final draft of our evaluation and recommendations. This draft incorporates most of the suggested changes faxed to us by Charles Moyer.

This has been a most congenial and instructive exercise for both of us. We hope that it will prove to be useful to you and your team as you continue the valuable work of the Institute.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since 1980, the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights has played a unique and critical role in promoting human rights and democratic culture in Latin America and the Caribbean. Its distinctive status and niche in the region's institutional landscape -- neither formally a part of the inter-American system nor of the governmental sector -- have enabled the Institute to establish a program characterized by unusual degrees independence, credibility and access to key actors. Its core educational and promotional functions have helped to build a vast regional network, in both the public and non-governmental sectors, of well-trained professionals who are committed to the protection and promotion of human rights and the consolidation of a democratic culture in the region.

Today, however, changes in the political, social and institutional environments of the Americas present challenges for which the Institute must find creative responses. The Institute must find ways to organize itself internally to meet the increasingly complex demands made upon its people and systems by a variety of claimants and clients who look to the Institute for leadership.

To assess the current status of the Institute and its place in the inter-American firmament, and to identify issues and opportunities of importance for the charting of its future trajectories, the Institute engaged in a series of discussions and consultations in the first part of 1997. To this end, the Institute called on two outside consultants, Michael Shifter and Stephen Cox, to design and facilitate a series of structured discussions and interviews with key members of the Institute's staff, board, donor community, clients and other interested parties. Our scope of work instructed us to conduct a general evaluation of the current status of the Institute's programs and management

systems, and to present recommendations on ways in which the Institute might enhance its ability to continue to make significant contributions in the future.

The consultants met on two occasions (in January and March of 1997) with a core planning group composed of selected Institute staff, board members, and invited representatives of donor institutions. The consultants also interviewed dozens of other Institute staff, clients, observers and others and reviewed a number of internal documents prepared by Institute staff for this exercise and other materials prepared for other purposes.

This report is neither an exhaustive evaluation of the Institute's current program and status, nor a comprehensive blueprint for the Institute's future. Either of those products would have required considerably greater allocations of time and resources than were available for this effort, and it was not the intention of this undertaking to produce such in-depth appraisals. Rather, this report presents:

a) a brief overview of the context or environment in which the Institute must operate today,

b) our considered summary of the current status of the Institute's programs and institutional development today, drawn in part from the collective reflections of the core planning group, melded with our best effort to synthesize the many and diverse perspectives of the other persons and materials consulted, and

c) a summary of our recommendations for enhancing the Institute's effectiveness in the future.

This effort would not have been possible without the openness and support of Juan Méndez and Pedro Nikken, respectively the Institute's Executive Director and President of the Board, both of whom richly deserve our thanks. We are also deeply grateful to other staff and board members of the Institute and to other participants in this brief appraisal for their cooperation and candor.

We have tried to collect and assess a great deal of material in a relatively short period of time, and offer herein our most candid appraisal of what we saw and heard. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that this report may contain unintentional errors of fact or interpretation. We accept full responsibility for any instances in which we may have inadvertently misstated the complex truth of this important institution.

2. REFLECTIONS ON THE INSTITUTE TODAY

2.1. The inter-American context

The context in which the Institute must operate today is fundamentally different from the context in which the Institute was created in 1980. Here are but a few of the more salient attributes of the new context that emerged in our discussions with the Institute and other respondents:

- In the 1980s, many countries of the region were engulfed by armed conflicts which pitted different ideologies against each other. In the course of these political conflicts, a number of governments in the Americas systematically violated human rights. Today, however, many countries have seen previously high levels of political violence replaced with different but correspondingly high levels of social violence and criminal

activity. Non-governmental actors (narcotraffickers and organized criminals, etc.) present qualitatively different threats to human rights, while the persistence of authoritarian attitudes and institutions in many newly democratized (or redemocratized) countries keeps alive the prospect of extrajudicial or other inappropriate responses to keep order and address growing public concerns about crime and insecurity.

- Today, the vast majority of the countries in the region have democratically elected civilian governments, and are grappling with the complexities of building democratic institutions. The building of democratic culture is very much on the regional agenda today in a way that was not so in 1980.
- Security forces (police and military) in many countries still routinely fail to respect basic human rights and frequently commit abuses.
- Judicial systems and other public institutions are still largely deficient throughout the region, resulting in large scale impunity for violators of rights.
- A growing community of institutions concerned with democratic culture and human rights has gained a solid foothold in the region. Apart from the national and international human rights groups that have labored for years in these fields, new actors include the Organization of American States (reflected in the continued work of the longstanding Inter-American Commission of Human Rights and the more recent Unit for the Promotion of Democracy), the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, various dependencies of the United Nations, independent actors such as the International Foundation for Electoral Systems and the Carter Center, a growing community of bilateral and regional donor

institutions, and others. The emergence of so many new actors has raised questions about the need for reappraisals and reforms of the inter-American system and its mechanisms for protecting and promoting human rights and democracy.

- At a more grassroots level, the extraordinary proliferation since 1980 of non-governmental and community- or member-based organizations has provided the Institute and other members of the human rights/democracy community with a huge new population of interlocutors representing, or claiming to represent, the interests of many of those populations most affected by human rights abuses or failures of democratic institutions (women, the poor, the landless, indigenous populations, children, etc.). An important concomitant of the emergence of these actors is the introduction to the human rights agenda of a host of new categories or definitions of human rights. These include an array of social and economic rights that were perhaps overshadowed in the early 1980s by the human rights issues highlighted by the nature of the armed political conflicts of the period.

- Fundamental changes in the nature and scale of the responsibilities accepted by the governments of the region, particularly in the areas of social and economic welfare, have led to the wholesale transference of social and economic functions to the private sector and organizations of civil society that are ill-prepared for these new roles. These changes have helped to put social and economic issues on the human rights agenda in new formulations and contexts.

- The basic rights of the Americas' most unprotected and marginalized populations are still routinely abused. Though nothing new, this

phenomenon is nevertheless a terribly important aspect of the environment that the Institute must consider as it addresses its future.

- Finally, the community of potential allies with important skills and expertise has also increased. Due in no small way to the success of the Institute in training and supporting new cadres of human rights professionals, many countries in the region now have extensive networks of qualified Institute alumni and other human rights actors. These people represent an important resource available for new activities in the fields of human rights and democracy.

2.2. The Institute in this context

This rapidly changing context presents both opportunities and risks for the Institute. As the Institute approaches its third decade, it is well-positioned to maintain and expand its impressive position of intellectual and professional leadership in a diverse array of human rights issue areas. On the other hand, the very diversity of the issues and institutions now crowding the human rights/democracy agenda threatens to tug and pull the Institute into too many competing directions and overwhelm its impressive but nevertheless limited capacity to respond.

2.2.1. General comments

We found that the beneficiaries, participants and colleagues whom we interviewed in this appraisal, on the whole, felt that the Institute's programs and activities address an important concern or problem, are well-organized,

and for the most part yield positive results. We will discuss these programs in greater detail below.

For now, suffice it to say that the Institute's programs are very highly regarded and are considered by our interlocutors to be important features of the programmatic landscape today. The Institute has succeeded in establishing its legitimacy and credibility among a large and quite diverse constituency of clients, participants and other professionals in human rights and democracy. Its technical assistance services are regarded as highly responsive to clients' needs and of generally high quality. The Institute has succeeded in forging strong collaborative relationships with many other organizations throughout the region. We concur with these strongly positive perceptions.

In a very real sense, however, the Institute now runs the risk of becoming a victim of its own success. Having established its legitimacy and credibility as an unparalleled source of expertise and leadership in a number of areas, it finds itself besieged by competing requests from a variety of aspiring claimants for its attentions. If it responds to all, it may well end up serving only a few adequately.

This fragmentation, and the consequent failure to take adequate advantage of the extraordinary opportunities for synergies among the different programs of the Institute, is our greatest concern in this report. To far too significant a degree, the Institute has allowed its program to be driven and defined by donors and other clients who make demands on its time and resources, and it has paid too little attention to thinking carefully about the overall logic and direction of its program as a whole and of the relationships between individual components of its programs.

In general, we have come away encouraged with the prospects for the Institute's ability to deal with these challenges. One of the most important reasons for our optimism is the impact that the Institute's new executive director has managed to have on the Institute's general direction and zeitgeist in a very short period of time. Intelligent, engaged leadership has and can continue to make an important difference in the Institute's efforts to focus its efforts strategically and optimize its impact.

2.2.2. Specific programs and program areas

At present, the Institute has four broad program areas, as follows: CAPEL; Education; Civil Society; and Public Institutions. It also has separate units that perform complementary functions. The Institute has many more specific programs and projects, constituting a wide-ranging, comprehensive, inter-American human rights agenda. For this exercise, we asked relevant staff to prepare separate "program profiles" containing descriptive data, and they came up with 26 such profiles. Although each of these has merit and is defensible on its own terms, they are too scattered and unwieldy. This necessarily selective (an in-depth evaluation of all Institute activities would be a monumental task) assessment of several programs and projects is intended to suggest ways in which the Institute might conceive of an alternative set of programs that respond effectively to the region's emerging concerns and challenges -- and that take into account the Institute's resources, talents, and many comparative advantages. A focused, coherent, and realistic agenda would enable the Institute to carry out its mandate, and perform its valuable work, even more successfully than it does today.

- **CAPEL**

CAPEL is widely recognized as one of the Institute's most successful and efficient programs. Launched in 1985, CAPEL has carried out a sustained program of technical assistance and services to electoral tribunals in many Latin American and Caribbean countries. It also regularly undertakes electoral observation missions (in 1997, missions are planned to seven countries). In our view, CAPEL performs a valuable service and has helped meet an important need in the region. Perhaps most significantly, it has developed a region-wide network and serves as the technical secretariat of the Interamerican Union of Electoral Bodies. In appraising areas in which democratic advances in the hemisphere over the past several years have been most notable, the improved performance of a number of electoral tribunals especially stands out. CAPEL has contributed in great measure to such progress.

There has been some discussion about the proper place and weight of CAPEL within the Institute's overall program. Particularly at certain moments -- such as last year's Nicaraguan elections -- CAPEL has absorbed a disproportionate share of the Institute's resources. Although this can occasionally distort the Institute's general work and profile, it is unlikely to present a serious problem in the future, particularly since there are no anticipated elections in the immediate future comparable in significance to Nicaragua's. The idea that CAPEL should spin off from the Institute does not seem viable to us in light of the growing intersection between human rights and democracy-building agendas, and the Center's positive contribution to the Institute.

CAPEL's work does, however, raise a number of concerns that ought to be addressed. First, its efforts with the magistrates of electoral tribunals tend to vary in effectiveness, depending on the nature of relations in different countries. Observers note a generally favorable, though uneven, record. Second, unlike just a few years ago, there are now many election experts in the region, and a variety of organizations -- governmental and non-governmental -- crowd this field. The competition is keen, and CAPEL needs to consider carefully its appropriate role and niche within in this sector. Also related to elections, there is a valid concern -- often raised with respect to other organizations such as the OAS -- about the advisability of a single institution performing both technical assistance and monitoring functions. It might be worth distinguishing more sharply between these two roles.

Finally, CAPEL's work is no longer restricted to electoral processes, but rather encompasses other key subjects such as political parties, legislatures, civil society, local government, freedom of expression, and social and economic rights (though not formally assigned to CAPEL, this last theme does engage the efforts of some of CAPEL's staff). CAPEL's efforts in the area of political parties have been welcome and important, though it might emphasize a more policy-oriented, and less academic, agenda, including a concern with party and campaign financing. Its preliminary work along these lines needs to be strengthened. We believe that freedom of expression is another priority concern that would make sense for the Institute to pursue. The meeting in Cartagena on this subject in early 1997 was a promising effort in this area. It is unclear, however, whether this line of work fits best within CAPEL.

We do have questions about two areas of CAPEL's current agenda: social and economic rights, and legislatures. (We recognize that this is only circumstantially assigned to CAPEL staff, but address it in this section nevertheless, as it has no other apparent program home in the Institute).

Although, as we highlight at the outset of this report, social and economic rights are absolutely critical concerns that deserve sustained and serious effort, it is important to stress that the Institute's work to date has borne little fruit. The Institute's activity with CEPAL has not been especially productive. Here again, moreover, the connection of this subject to the overall purpose and profile of CAPEL is not clear. It may be more effective to take up the key human rights implications deriving from the widespread social and economic distress in the region by working on improving protections for the most disadvantaged sectors of the region's population.

Finally, the PRODEL program, concerned with strengthening legislatures, should be assessed in light of an increasingly crowded field. In contrast to the crucial area of political parties, for example, such organizations as the IDB, OAS, and AID are involved in efforts to modernize legislatures. CAPEL should consider how it might most effectively direct its resources, taking into account its potential productivity and comparative advantages.

CAPEL's agenda is among the most exciting in the Institute, and in the democracy field generally. The Center's new leadership assures continue competence and good relations with its vast network throughout the hemisphere. Our sense, however, is that CAPEL -- perhaps more so than other Institute programs -- faces a number of major challenges, especially in light of a more crowded and competitive institutional field and the difficulty of formulating a more focused agenda. Should CAPEL decide to more systematically explore how it might shape its agenda -- and invigorate the democracy promotion work that many organizations in and out of the region are now wrestling with -- it might consider engaging some high-level consultants to help develop a strategic vision.

- **Education**

Throughout the hemisphere, the Institute is perhaps best known for its interdisciplinary course, launched in 1983. The annual course has evolved substantially over the years, providing higher-level instruction and responding more effectively to the needs and interests of the students. The spin-off, subregional courses also get high marks from participants and beneficiaries. As a November 1996 meeting in Guatemala showed, this activity has stimulated the formation of a dense and vast network of people with a background and interest in human rights. Though the impact of such a network is difficult to measure, it seems to have produced a higher and broader level of consciousness in Latin America and the Caribbean about key human rights tenets. Like any successful network, this one, propelled by the Institute, has generated a critical mass, putting teachers, advocates, officials and others together, working in various ways on human rights, who would otherwise be isolated from one another.

The course is emblematic of what the Institute does best -- it responds to a general demand, convokes people who come from diverse sectors, identifies qualified instructors and consultants, organizes a highly efficient activity, enhances a crucial network function and, of course, carries out educational and promotional work. In addition, both the detailed evaluation questionnaires filled out by course participants and less direct indicators such as alumni engaged in some way in human rights work suggest that the interdisciplinary course nicely fits the Institute's fundamental, core mission of contributing to a democratic culture in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Institute should continue to be creative in revising its course design, and responding to new demands and human rights challenges.

Our sense is that, while the Institute's education materials are of generally high quality -- and its activities are positive and worthwhile -- there is still considerable unevenness, and both could be consistently better. Education is a core concern for the Institute. What is still lacking is a better understanding of what materials and methodologies work especially well -- and what don't work so well. It might be productive to undertake a more systematic assessment in this field -- to inform, guide, and orient future program plans and priorities. Our sense is that a great deal more can be done to maximize the impact of the Institute's very good work in human rights education.

- **Civil Society**

In some respects, the Institute's "civil society" program reflects its greatest strength -- and weakness. Mirroring an enormously wide-ranging concept with little precision is a big, important program that covers a lot of ground and many different sectors, including women, migrants, the displaced, and indigenous populations; institutional strengthening also gets a lot of attention. Such lines of work as the prevention of torture and treatment of victims fall under this program category as well.

Our sense is that some of these specific projects -- indigenous rights, for example -- have to date not been especially productive, mainly reflecting the tremendous complexities involved in working with this population. It might be useful to reconsider work with this group -- not because it is not fundamentally important, but because it may not make sense for the Institute to do so. In addition, it might fit more sensibly in other program areas, such as public institutions, since the work of ombudsmen, for example, often emphasizes indigenous populations. Further, despite its obvious importance, work on prevention of torture and treatment of victims may not,

in light of competing priorities, deserve the highest place on the Institute's program agenda.

To achieve greater impact and strategic purpose, the Institute might concentrate its work on one or two key civil society sectors. Its efforts on gender and human rights, for example, offer interesting possibilities for consolidation and expansion. In this effort, however, the Institute should consider carefully and think through how organizations focused on this topic should be strengthened, and proceed to develop strategic alliances with other groups with deeper substantive expertise and programs. Otherwise, the area risks expending a lot of effort -- resulting in meager effects.

To stimulate interest and active participation in the Institute's civil society work, it is important to attach the activities to specific issues that most affect the beneficiary population. The question of criminal violence and citizen security is especially critical, and it is encouraging that the Institute is beginning to pursue it within the civil society program. The challenge is to integrate such a key substantive concern with clear strategic objectives and the needs and demands of clients. In this area, the Institute could most benefit from perhaps fewer activities and greater focus.

- **Public Institutions**

The Institute's long-standing work in this area has been very impressive -- and indistinguishable from its core mission. Perhaps the greatest human rights and democratic deficiency, and challenge, in the hemisphere is the administration of justice. The Institute's education and promotion efforts, working with the region's judges and other justice system officials, have been generally regarded as positive. It is unclear, however, what strategy or approach is most effective in trying to bring about positive change in this

sector. To what extent, for example, is training and education most appropriate, or might it make more sense to explore other ways to advance institutional reform? The Institute might grapple with the limitations of training, and the possible benefits of alternative approaches.

The Institute's work with ombudsmen (or "defensores del pueblo") in the region seems particularly pioneering and critical, in our opinion. Though these are now set up at the national level in a dozen Latin American countries -- and in Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala in Central America, ombudsmen offices call for sustained support and effective collaboration from the Institute and other organizations committed to making them work. The Institute might try to get a better handle on how well these are currently working, and explore how to make ombudsmen better known and more accepted in these societies. The Institute's current secretariat function for the network of ombudsmen in the region makes eminent sense and should be strengthened.

The increasingly troubling problem of crime and citizen insecurity is relevant not only for the civil society program, but for public institutions as well. Despite progress on many fronts in controlling abuses, there is still a great deal of work that remains to be done in this area. The Institute should consider devoting more sustained and systematic effort to both education/training and institutional reform of the region's police and armed forces. The Institute's annual conference, co-sponsored with the United States Southern Command for the second year in early 1997, is a positive activity. Some participants observed, however, that large conferences are not especially conducive to discussing specific issues, and that it might be more productive to organize such activities with smaller groups. In any case, high-quality, sustained work with security forces should be an important priority for the Institute. The case of Guatemala offers a special opportunity for the

Institute to undertake a more in-depth program with that country's armed forces.

Finally, as part of the Institute's concern with public institutions, greater attention should be accorded to prison conditions, and possibilities of reform, in the region. This issue has been generally neglected by human rights organizations. There is now greater opportunity than before for an organization like the Institute to get basic information about prisons, provide technical support and assistance to relevant officials, and seek to formulate ideas and proposals for institutional reform. This would make sense in light of the issue's mounting urgency, and the absence of any other significant actors currently working in the area.

- **Integral Programs**

In an effort to encourage greater synergy and impact, the Institute decided to carry out more comprehensive, integrated programs, including a variety of areas, in a single country. It has launched the experimental idea in Guatemala and, to a lesser extent and with an initially more limited scope of activities, in Cuba. Though it is too soon to assess the value of related activities in practice, this notion has great appeal conceptually, and is fully consistent with the thrust of many recommendations and ideas in this report. In addition, Guatemala strikes us as a wise selection, in light of the critical opportunity now facing that country, and the Institute's well-established track record there. The Cuba program also seems very innovative and positive, and draws substantially on the Institute's unique status and role in the hemisphere.

- **Research/Publications**

The Institute has properly focused its program on education and promotion activities, and technical assistance and services, oriented to both non-governmental organizations and public sector institutions. These instruments reflect the Institute's strengths. At the same time, however, the Institute has also produced a substantial body of research, as evidenced by its many publications, including books and journals.

Although several of these publications are highly regarded and cited by human rights and democracy analysts and practitioners, they tend to be of uneven quality and occasionally fall short of the highest standards. They are not regularly subjected to external, rigorous review. In addition, the relationship of the Institute's publications to its full program menu of workshops, meetings, seminars and courses could be substantially strengthened. At present, the Institute's research and information-gathering efforts are not sufficiently connected to its larger strategic purposes and aims.

- **Impact Indicators**

Separate from, though related to, the Institute's research program have been its various attempts to assess the impact of its work. The Institute routinely evaluates its activities, often asking beneficiaries how useful they proved to be in their work. Some of its questionnaires, such as those employed to appraise the last interdisciplinary course, are impressive in their detail and specificity. The Institute also undertook a particularly creative and elaborate exercise in Guatemala last year along these same lines. CAPEL recently attempted to formulate some useful ideas about impact indicators as well.

Despite the Institute's notable advances in this area, there is, however, still considerable room for improvement. There have not, for example, been solid, comparative studies that attempt to get a better handle on what sorts of activities the Institute does particularly well -- and not so well. Such exercises, of relatively simple design but tremendous potential benefit, could be easily handled by several outside consultants, in close collaboration with responsible Institute staff. Despite substantial resources invested in various survey and questionnaire techniques, there is still little internal capability for systematic learning that can translate into better performance.

- **Inter-Americanness**

Many Institute observers question to what extent the organization is genuinely and fully "inter-American." Some have asked whether it ought to be so or not. The Institute is predominantly Central American in its activities, and predominantly Central American, even Costa Rican, in its staff composition. At present, there is only sporadic work in South America, very little in the non-Spanish speaking Caribbean, and rather limited activity in Mexico.

Our sense is that while it is perfectly defensible for the Institute to concentrate its efforts in Central America due to reasons of need, propinquity and effectiveness, it is also important for the organization to strive for fuller inter-American coverage. It can do so perhaps most efficiently through establishing strategic alliances with like-minded, collegial organizations. The Institute already does this to some extent, though it should seek to develop a more systematic approach along these lines. And the Institute should try to diversify its staff and aim for a broader representation from Latin America and the Caribbean.

- **Inter-American System**

The Institute has an opportunity to work in a more creative and sustained way with parts of the inter-American system, especially in light of the new leadership at the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights -- and the resolution of institutional collaboration pledged at the 1996 General Assembly meeting of the OAS. This does not, however, mean that the Institute should consider compromising its prized independence. Rather, it should explore ways to develop complementary programs, with the Commission concentrating on cases and the Institute working on thematic reports, institutional reform ideas, or assistance efforts that are responsive to the Commission's concerns.

- **Constituency/Media Outreach**

Although the Institute has been successful in helping to build and sustain a region-wide human rights network, it has not been able to accomplish what has often eluded the human rights sector in this hemisphere -- broadening the constituency to reach and include those groups not normally identified with such a community. This remains a central challenge -- how to reconcile unwavering commitment to fundamental human rights principles with a push to engage a widening circle of sectors (professional and business groups, for example) and the general public on such key concerns. Many human rights figures have in fact remarked on the risks of "ghettoization" involved in such work. The effective and creative use of the media in disseminating the Institute's human rights education materials to carefully targeted sectors in the region is one way to achieve such a result (the Institute's production of "national education spots" marks a step in this direction).

2.2.3. Institutional development and managerial issues

This section presents our evaluation of the current status of the Institute in a number of areas. Recommendations for improvements are presented in Section 3.

- **Board governance**

The Institute is indeed fortunate to have a strongly qualified and diverse board of directors representing many of the countries and constituencies in the region. Most members of the board have led distinguished careers in relevant fields and bring a wealth of experience, wisdom and knowledge to the Institute.

Unfortunately, in our opinion, the Institute has not managed historically to take full advantage of this important resource. Historically, and at the present time, the board functions more as a board of advisors or as a visiting committee than as an active board of directors. Sporadic attempts in the past to form standing committees of the board have generated limited results, due in part to the absence of staff support for those committees and the lack of a clear mandate for action. At present, and for the most part, the board is not actively engaged in overall strategic programmatic guidance for the Institute, oversight/review of budgeting, financial management or other strategic management concerns, fund raising or other resource mobilization activities, or most of the other key responsibilities of strong non-profit boards.

To be fair, we should note that the Institute's board functions in much the same way as the vast majority of non-profit boards. Relevant, high-quality training and orientation services and materials for non-profit boards of

governors have become generally available only in the past few years (and more recently than that in Spanish). A deliberate effort to engage the board in an explicit discussion of its composition, role and responsibilities may yield important changes and benefits.

- **Executive leadership**

As noted earlier, this is one area in which the consultants are unequivocally optimistic. The arrival of Juan Méndez as Executive Director in mid-1996 and his subsequent decision to revitalize the Management Committee (Comité de Dirección -- composed of the leaders of program areas, Méndez himself, and Administration and Finance Director Charles Moyer) are major steps forward. Staff throughout the Institute communicated a sense of optimism that the new executive team, in general, and the new executive director, in particular, were sincerely committed to improving the effectiveness of the Institute. The periodic meetings of the Management Committee offer a much-needed forum for discussions and decisions on an array of programmatic and managerial issues.

We are concerned, however, that the myriad tasks of running and improving the Institute may prove too overwhelming for the current executive team. The additional tasks recommended in Section 3 (routine strategic planning, inter-program learning, communications strategies and more aggressive and diversified resource mobilization) will only exacerbate this concern, unless a way is found for effectively distributing these responsibilities.

- **Planning and programming capacity**

The Institute lacks and desperately needs a serious, institutionalized, routine planning capacity that is capable of (a) generating and communicating an

overall strategic vision for the Institution's program, (b) ensuring that different program area plans are consistent with and integrated into the overall strategic vision, and (c) guaranteeing that human, financial and other administrative resources are allocated accordingly.

Although the Institute does currently engage in a series of planning activities in the final quarter of each year, these activities tend to be largely program-specific and reactive to donor and client demands and opportunities, with little integration or shared planning across program areas. We were concerned about the lack of a clearly articulated Institute-wide strategic vision or plan. At the individual program level, we perceived a generalized absence of clear, explicit thinking about the relationships among different activities and between specific activities and their intended consequences. Activities appeared to be justified more often because (a) there was a demand and funding for undertaking them, and/or (b) because they appeared to be intrinsically relevant to the general program area and therefore worthwhile. The Institute's financial management team noted that the lack of an Institute-wide strategic planning process also greatly complicated budgeting and cost management functions.

To be fair, the most recent planning cycle (at the end of 1996) began only a couple of months after the arrival of the new executive director, and before the new executive team was chosen and in place. Moreover, these are not weaknesses unique to the Institute. Indeed, the lack of an explicit logical structure in program plans is far more common than its presence. To its credit, the Institute's programs do appear, to us and to our interviewees, to be relevant and effective on the whole. But their effectiveness could be greatly enhanced by a more rigorous planning process. See section 3 for more specific recommendations.

- **Institutional learning**

In part because of the programmatic fragmentation mentioned in Section 2, in part because of the Institute's tremendous and unrelenting workload, and in part because the Institute does not appear to be organized to do so, little actual institutional learning takes place. Consultants and visiting experts on a variety of themes come to the Institute and address their scopes of work without communicating their knowledge to the Institute staff. Individual programs generate new knowledge and experiences in isolation from other programs. Little is done systematically to harvest and exploit synergies by applying lessons from one program area to problems in another.

While the revitalized Management Committee provides one forum in which some of this shared learning can happen, it is nowhere near adequate for this challenge. The Committee is composed of some of the Institute's busiest people, who must discuss and decide an endless number of pressing issues in addition to managing their own respective spheres of responsibility. The organization and execution of activities designed to make the Institute an effective learning organization will require a qualitatively different approach and explicit delegations of responsibility for making it happen.

- **Resource mobilization**

The Institute does not have a systematic and comprehensive strategy for generating the resources it needs to be effective in its mission and to ensure its own institutional independence and stability. During the five years from 1992 through 1996, over two thirds (69.6%) of its grant resources came from two institutions: USAID (55.7%) and the European Community (13.9%). Of these two, only USAID made significant contributions to the core

institutional budget. Another six bilateral public donors (Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Spain) contributed an additional 20.3% of the budget, while private foundations and other non-governmental organizations contributed another 6.6%.

An endowment grant of \$350,000 from the Ford Foundation in 1991 established an Institute endowment which has since nearly quadrupled to approximately \$1.3 million. While this is healthy and commendable, the Institute has no clear plan for continuing to build this endowment, apart from the occasional investment of unrestricted funds or operating surpluses as they become available. For an institution with an annual operating budget of over \$7 million, the current endowment is far too small to constitute a solid independent financial foundation.

In recent years, the Institute has begun to make small efforts to engage support from other sources, but these remain too small and disjointed to constitute a significant component of an overall financial strategy. The Institute has succeeded in persuading some Latin American governments to make modest financial contributions as co-sponsors of specific events, but these remain token efforts that have no significant impact on the overall financial stability or viability of the Institute.

What is perhaps most disturbing in this panorama is the absence at present of a plan or appropriate delegations of responsibility for doing anything about this situation. Individual program area directors have tacitly assigned responsibilities for maintaining and improving relationships with the current institutional donors with which they are most familiar. Juan Méndez has taken on himself some responsibility for initiating relationships with major new donors from which the Institute has historically received little support. A committed and apparently quite skilled pair of Institute staffers

constitute a much-needed Grants Unit, which carefully monitors the terms and conditions of institutional grants to ensure that donor requirements are satisfied and to counsel the Institute on how to make the most of the grant income that it has successfully negotiated. Little or no effort has been made to develop flows of resources from non-traditional, non-institutional donors (the public at large, corporations, etc.).

But nobody is responsible for the general development and oversight of a financial development strategy. A 1989 Ford Foundation grant earmarked resources for hiring a development officer for this purpose, but the position was apparently never filled. The many competing demands on the time and energies of the Management Committee make it unlikely, in our view, that its members will be able to proactively conceive and execute a careful, Institute-wide plan for resource mobilization.

Thus, the Institute remains vulnerable to the caprices of the institutional donors and other paying clients who look to the Institute for services that correspond to their own needs and strategies. While it is laudable that the Institute has developed the capacity to be responsive to the needs of its constituents, the lack of a more aggressive strategy to generate flows of unrestricted income and/or income to finance specific initiatives stemming from its own strategic planning process continues to contribute to the reactive and fragmented nature of Institute programming mentioned in Section 2.

- **Financial management**

First, a caveat. Neither of the consultants pretends to possess any particular expertise in financial management systems. We did, however, speak at length with several of those responsible for these tasks and have the following observations.

In our limited review, the Institute's financial management and accounting systems appear to be in order and well-managed. Routine annual audits from independent firms and grant-specific audits have repeatedly confirmed that the Institute is a responsible steward of its funds and those of its donors. An accounting team of seven is tasked out to individual program areas and charged with overseeing the complex financial accountability requirements of the Institute's several donors. The Institute's accounting department and its comptroller prepare and distribute very complete monthly financial progress reports for individual program managers and for the Management Committee.

These efforts are made more difficult, however, by inadequate computer software and hardware. The entire accounting system is housed on an elderly 486 server. Weekly backups are prepared, but the lack of adequate hardware presents a very real risk for the accounting system as a whole.

Software is another, perhaps greater, problem. The Institute currently uses a locally-acquired accounting system that is not Windows-compatible and fails to meet needs in other respects. As a result, the financial management system cannot be easily accessed through the Windows environment in use throughout the Institute. The financial team is currently shopping for a more adequate software package. Procurement and operationalization of an effective software and hardware mix for the accounting system may also lead to other economies and benefits.

- **Human resources**

The Institute appears to be making rapid and overdue progress in the development of human resource policies and systems. Joining the Institute

as a full-time Administration and Finance Director only in January of this year, Charles Moyer has made the systematization of human resource practices a top priority.

There was and still is a lot to do in this area. In the Institution's 17-year history, it has never engaged in the practice of routine performance evaluations, did not have clearly established salary scales and ranges, and has lacked a carefully prepared and routinely used manual of personnel policies. Different employees in similar job categories had widely divergent salaries and little sense of what their expectations might be for future remuneration. Benchmarking studies contracted from outside consulting firms were largely based on comparisons with private industry and therefore not exceedingly useful in comparing Institute remuneration levels with other like institutions.

The Institute has recently prepared and is now implementing a new set of human resource rules (*reglamento de personal*), establishing clear job categories and ranges. These new rules set forth clear and standardized expectations for salaries and benefits in different categories. The Institute is also contemplating an effort to clarify and standardize rules for contracting and remunerating consultants.

Finally, the Institute is studying ways to equilibrate and upgrade a series of benefit policies. At present, some Institute employees have private health insurance benefits and others are covered by Costa Rican public sector insurers. The Institute is currently evaluating the degree of latitude that it might have under Costa Rican law in offering all employees the option of electing private insurance plans.

These efforts make a great deal of sense and are long overdue. Charles Moyer appears to be approaching a complex series of tasks with a great deal of energy and common sense, and we are confident that these efforts will pay off handsomely in the coming years.

We are, however, concerned about two aspects of the current human resource development efforts. First, though obviously an able administrator, Mr. Moyer by his own admission lacks professional training or experience in the increasingly complex field of human resource management. He has carefully and conscientiously attempted to set forth new policies and practices that make sense, but has done so without drawing upon the resources of specialized professional counsel in this area. New salary ranges have been estimated and standardized ("eyeballed") in reference to the diversity of levels currently used at the Institute, but not with reference to any external benchmarks observed in comparable institutions. Similarly, new policies have been developed with common sense, financial prudence and equity in mind, but without reference to best practices in human resource development in a number of comparable institutions. This is understandable, given the paucity in Costa Rica of technical assistance in this area (those firms that do offer such services typically do not understand the distinctive needs of non-profit institutions). Nevertheless, we are concerned that the new systems may not be as useful as they might be had they been developed with qualified professional guidance from specialists in these areas.

Our second concern is that while the current overhaul of human resource policies is offering long-overdue support on the systematization of salaries and benefits, it does not apparently go beyond the improvement of what have historically been termed "personnel policies" to consider a host of important issues related to proactive human resource development. For an institution

as reliant as it is on attracting, retaining and continuing to invest in human intellectual capital, we are concerned about the absence of concrete strategies for enabling Institute staff to acquire the skills and knowledge they need to continuously build upon in order to be effective.

True, a proactive staff training and skills development program is often seen as a luxury in a financially dependent non-profit organization. Nevertheless, some modest effort to begin to define strategies for offering career development support to Institute staff may be a very high payoff investment.

Related to this is an explicit need, shared by several in our informal discussions, to begin to consider guidelines for staff turnover and renewal, particularly for professional staff. Several of the Institute's professional staff have been employed by the Institute for long periods. We heard, and concur with, the observation that guidelines for limiting the time period in which professional program staff can be either employed at the Institute and/or employed in the same capacity might (a) strengthen the broader human rights community by "recycling" some of its more experienced professionals into other institutions, and (b) bring new ideas and energy to the Institute.

- **Communications and information**

As one of the premier centers in the Americas of research, public debate and training on issues of human rights and democratization, the Institute has an important story to tell. Every year, the Institute generates an impressive amount of new thinking and reflection on important themes that should be more carefully marketed and distributed to a broader audience. At present, the distribution of its intellectual output is targeted mostly toward a restricted population of affinity organizations and other human rights professionals, with little attention paid to reaching new audiences or to gauging the actual

potential demand for new publications or other forms of output. As Education Area coordinator Dina Rodriguez told us, it seems that many programs have unthinkingly adopted the practice of "automatically" publishing 1000 copies of new materials, without estimating likely demand.

The Institute has a tremendous opportunity to take advantage of its current and past output by developing and following a more deliberate, multi-faceted communications strategy. In addition to revamping its approach to its publications (about which we will say more in Section 3), it lacks an overall strategy for using mass media and other mechanisms for getting its materials and its lessons to a broader audience.

Recently, the Institute has begun to develop an Internet presence as well. This approach offers tremendous opportunities not only for reaching a broader audience with word of its output and activities, but for using the Internet and other computer-mediated communication and information technologies for other strategic purposes. The Institute's current Internet presence is embryonic and difficult to evaluate. A quick review of its structure and proposed future content, however, suggests to us that much more can be done to take advantage of the possibilities presented by this medium.

At present, the Institute's site on the World Wide Web (<http://www.iidh.ed.cr>) is little more than an Internet version of a series of program brochures, offering in its present form little opportunity for interactive uses, for creating a more dynamic meeting and discussion space for its constituents, or for soliciting feedback on the Institute and its programs. This is not a criticism of the Institute; web-site design is a new medium whose diverse possibilities are understood by few in the region. Nevertheless, much more can be done.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. Programmatic recommendations

3.1.1. Program planning

Although many of the Institute's programs offer products and services of high quality and great utility to its constituents in the Americas, we believe that the Institute falls short of its potential because it has not articulated a coherent, overall strategic vision of its program and what it wants to accomplish. Lacking such a blueprint, the Institute is vulnerable to the changing priorities of donors, clients and others who look to the Institute for assistance in addressing their own priorities.

We strongly recommend that the Institute identify and engage a qualified strategic planning facilitator to assist and accompany the Institute through a thorough strategic planning process. The Institute should ensure that the core planning team includes the best and clearest conceptual thinkers from each of its program areas, as well as representatives from administrative teams, the board, and key constituencies. The Institute should plan and budget for members of the planning team to spend up to three or four weeks, over a period of several months in the development, research, vetting and refinement of the new strategic plan.

The core planning team began a process of this sort in its meetings with the consultants in January and March, but this was simply a heuristic exercise to generate thinking and inputs for the assessment presented in this document, and should not be seen as a substitute for a more complete planning effort.

The specific order and content of the steps of the planning process will ultimately depend on the methodology used for the process, but the process should in any event include some variant of each of the following steps:

- Defining the core purpose of the Institute. Even if this exercise yields no new articulation of the Institute's purpose, the experience of thinking through the underlying issues will help to consolidate the planning team and ensure buy-in and acceptance of the eventual strategy. All other elements of the planning process are then structured to identify the best way to achieve this core purpose.
- Articulation of the Institute's driving values – its thoughts, beliefs and attitudes about how the world works, how the Institute does its work, how it relates to other people and institutions, and how it conceives of its responsibilities.
- A rigorous analysis of the external environment in which the Institute must operate, to identify key issues, pressures, trends, actors, dangers, risks and opportunities which the Institute's program plans must in some way reflect.
- A careful, self-critical analysis of the Institute's own strengths and weaknesses, including candid assessments of its people, its systems, its legitimacy, its relationships, its board, its leadership, its programs and its management capacities.
- An in-depth review of its current programs, to ascertain whether they truly reflect the Institute's core purpose, whether they take optimal advantage of the external environment, whether they honestly reflect the

Institute's own comparative advantage (given its strengths and weaknesses vis-a-vis other institutions), whether they make sense together, and whether the whole of the several programs is greater than the sum of its parts.

- An effort to imagine and evaluate other potential programs not currently in the Institute's portfolio that might make more sense than some of its current programs, given the criteria adduced in the preceding paragraph.
- An effort to identify the optimal program structure, the way in which different program activities are interrelated and assigned to different people and teams for supervision and execution. While program boundaries may coincide with the interests of major donors, donor priorities should not be the principal cause for defining program structure. We believe that we understand the logic of the current Institute program structure, but are not persuaded that it is optimal. We urge the Institute to carefully reconsider its program structure in the context of the larger planning exercise.
- The development and rigorous application of a model of change to the Institute's program thinking. A model of change is a series of testable hypotheses about how the Institute feels that it can accomplish the specific behavioral, institutional or policy changes that it feels it must effect in order to accomplish its core purpose. This should happen at several different levels.

For example, the Institute's current program structure may implicitly hypothesize that the empowerment of certain civil society institutions and work on electoral practices and institutions will help to develop a

democratic culture. These hypotheses need to become much more specific and explicit. Application of a model of change at the macro program level requires thinking seriously about the question: What are the specific decisions or changes that we think this set of activities will provoke or accomplish, and how?

Within each program, the application of a model of change requires program planners to think about the intended uses of the research they are supporting or undertaking, the intended uses of the skills that their training courses are designed to impart, the specific decisions or legislation that a public debate or advocacy activity is expected to effect. It is not enough to say that a program in a particular area should have research, training and advocacy activities. The application of a model of change requires thinking very carefully about what specific CHANGE each activity is supposed to accomplish, and how. Those hypotheses are then useful in the actual design of the activities and the overall content of the program, and in the evaluation of whether the model was correct and the program effective.

- A strategy for the transition from current program structures and activities to the desired new program strategy. No important evolution in a program can be accomplished without thinking realistically about how to begin responsible exits from current activities not included in the new plan and how to begin acquiring the institutional capacity for the new strategy.

- A careful analysis of the new alliances and other relationships needed with other institutions important to the execution of the new strategy.

- A plan for evaluating and monitoring the impact of the new strategy over time. This plan should include an explicit attempt to observe and test the hypotheses set forth in the model(s) of change used to design the program(s).

3.1.2. Program-specific recommendations

What follows are some concrete suggestions for how the Institute might develop a programmatic agenda that is coherent, reflects the organization's strengths, and responds effectively and creatively to the region's central human rights challenges. We begin with the very strong sense that the Institute cannot and should not take on every subject in the ever-expanding human rights agenda, that tough choices need to be made, with the above criteria in mind. Other actors and institutions in the field may be better positioned and equipped to pursue and tackle particular themes. Through its programs, the Institute is already making an important contribution to the promotion of human rights in the region. We are convinced that, with greater focus and clarity, its impact can be greater still.

- **CAPEL**

CAPEL should remain one of the Institute's core programs. It should focus on consolidating and refining its efforts in the electoral field; its networking function with the tribunal magistrados throughout the hemisphere is particularly important. Another priority should be its promising work on political parties, with specific attention to key policy issues such as party and campaign financing -- an emerging concern about which so little is actually known. CAPEL might consider reducing its work with legislatures, in light of so many other actors involved in that area. Freedom of expression is another

emerging and crucial issue, though it should not properly fall within CAPEL. Social and economic rights also doesn't fit in this program category, and we have reservations about the Institute taking this on as a program priority. Valid concerns about deep and persistent poverty might be more productively and efficiently addressed through other program areas. Finally, the program's new leadership should consider energizing an already good program by involving outside experts in thinking through such crucial issues as political party and campaign financing.

- **Education**

We are impressed with the apparent quality of the Institute's interdisciplinary course, and we encourage more sub-regional courses, such as those in Chile, Brazil and, most recently, Guatemala. The alumni of these courses are a tremendous resource for the Institute that should be effectively employed in other programs. It is important to continually update and improve the course, in response to detailed evaluations. In the education area generally, the Institute needs to learn more, however, about what has been most effective -- and not so effective -- in terms of materials and methodology. Such an exercise, seriously undertaken, would give the field greater rigor and credibility. We believe it would be worthwhile for the Institute to engage an outside consultant to undertake such an assignment.

- **Civil Society**

The Institute's positive work in this area needs to be substantially trimmed, targeted, and more strategically informed. It is impossible to work with all civil society organizations, and disadvantaged sectors, in the region. We believe the Institute's efforts in women's rights should get more sustained and systematic attention, and that work on, for example, indigenous rights,

might be left to other human rights groups -- or be incorporated into other programs such as public institutions. Such critical themes as crime and citizen insecurity should be assimilated into the Institute's work with civil society organizations, in light of growing concern among all sectors of the population.

- **Public Institutions**

The Institute should continue to emphasize and consolidate its secretariat/networking function -- not only in the electoral field, but in working with the region's ombudsmen. At some point, it might be useful for the Institute to organize a review of the performance and record of various ombudsmen to date. Training and education in the administration of justice should also be a high priority in this program, though a careful assessment of the value, and limitations, of training within often deficient justice systems should be undertaken. The Institute's work with the security forces is important, but could be substantially stronger. Our sense is that it would benefit from more concrete, focused consideration of specific issues, and that smaller workshops, with carefully selected participants, would be a more productive modality than large conferences. Finally, the area of prison conditions and reforms should be a key, and growing, element within this program. The Institute might engage a highly qualified consultant to map out what has been done, and needs to be done, in this sector, and to identify a coherent strategy for action and research.

- **Integral Programs**

The Institute should monitor carefully its integral program evolution in Guatemala, since this might be a potentially model approach for the future. In light of all the actors and institutions involved in Guatemala at present,

the Institute should define for itself a clear niche and role. The Institute's work in Cuba is appropriate, timely, and quite innovative. It should get high priority, and might eventually try to expand and bring in other Latin American specialists as well.

- **Research/Publications**

The Institute's research should be more targeted and focused. An agenda that identifies applied research assignments or tasks on priority issues should be developed. Our sense is that recently commissioned research on such emerging topics as freedom of expression and crime/citizen insecurity are appropriate and important. The Institute should work with consultants/researchers of the highest quality. The Institute should strive to be as cost-effective as possible in this, and hire consultants specifically by task, not put them on retainer. To the extent possible, moreover, Institute staff should collaborate with outside consultants; this would be provide an important opportunity for deeper program learning and professional development. The Institute should try to implement a system of outside review by independent experts to assure the highest quality in its publications. Standard and demanding criteria should apply consistently to anyone who wishes to publish with the Institute.

- **Impact Indicators**

The Institute should pay more attention to evaluating the learning benefits and impact of its work. In this effort, we believe it should stake out an intermediate position -- somewhere between doing nothing on the one hand, and developing excessively detailed and bureaucratic formulae on the other. What is striking is that after several decades of sustained work in human rights, there are few well-developed accounts about how positive change is

produced, and what techniques work well, and not so well, in the field. The Institute should take advantage of a real opportunity to make a contribution that would be of benefit to many groups along these lines. The Institute should either bring on a new staff member, or hire a consultant, to design and help implement such an approach. Our sense is that the Institute has recently done better in this regard, but that there is a good chance to make further progress. This person should also be responsible for developing a set of simple and clear performance indicators to help guide and inform Institute programs.

- **Inter-Americanness**

The Institute should strive to become more genuinely inter-American -- in its staff, consultants, and program activities. It should undertake a more systematic and targeted strategy to engage non-Central Americans. Our sense is that there have recently been some welcome advances on this score, and that they should be expanded. In addition, without diminishing its current and justified emphasis on Central America, the Institute should explore partnerships and strategic alliances with groups in South America, Mexico and the Caribbean, taking advantage of good opportunities.

- **Inter-American System**

In carrying out its program agenda, the Institute should seek to work together, when it makes sense to do so, with entities of the inter-American system, especially the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. This does not mean the Institute should give up its independence, but rather that it should try to play a complementary role, with an emphasis on promotion and education activities, working on themes that are also deemed to be of high priority by the Commission. In light of the Commission's substantial

caseload, growing emphasis on establishing a regional jurisprudence, and new leadership, the Institute has a good opportunity to perform a promotional function in human rights. We suggest that the Institute set up regular meetings with the Commission to explore possible areas of collaboration, or complementarity.

3.2. Institutional development and managerial recommendations

The recommendations presented in this section are steps that we feel might be timely, cost-effective, high-impact interventions that can help the Institute to become a much more effective organization. In most cases, they will involve an initial outlay of senior staff energy and financial resources that the Institute may not be able to spare in the very short run. We strongly suggest, however, that either (a) the Institute's next negotiations with its key donors should include budgets for some of these institutional development efforts, and/or (b) that the Institute invest some of its own limited unrestricted resources to begin to lay the groundwork for institutional reforms that should pay handsome returns fairly quickly and for a long time. The failure to invest seriously in institutional development initiatives in this case would be, in our opinion, a false economy.

- **Board member training and orientation**

One of the Institute's greatest untapped resources is its board of directors. With a modest investment of time and resources, the Institute may be able to engage its board much more effectively. To that end, we recommend:

(a) The Institute should engage its board in a self-evaluation exercise to review its roles, responsibilities, structure and composition. To that end, we specifically recommend that the Institute acquire and administer to its board members the recent Spanish language adaptation of the National Center for Nonprofit Board's "Self-Assessment for Nonprofit Governing Boards," an excellent initial appraisal tool.

(b) The Institute should invite its board, or at least the board's Permanent Commission, to participate in a professionally-facilitated two day event to discuss its role and decide how it might function more effectively as an active Board. Again, the NCNB offers excellent Spanish language services in this area and highly qualified trained facilitators.

(c) Depending on the results of steps (a) and (b) above, the Institute may wish to try to establish once again a small number of standing board committees, with designated staff professional and administrative support from the Institute, as a mechanism for engaging the voluntary counsel and energies of willing board members.

- **Executive leadership**

We commend the Institute on its recent accomplishments in this area and urge that the newly-reactivated Management Committee continue to meet routinely to discuss and decide on key issues. We remain concerned, however, that the magnitude and scope of the challenges facing the Institute's executive leadership may be too great for the present team.

Accordingly, we recommend that the Institute give serious consideration to, and raise funds for, the competitive international recruitment of an experienced professional to fill the currently vacant post of Associate

Executive Director. This person's job description should be carefully crafted, after extensive discussions with the current executive team and the president of the board, to include specific functions that will be his or her designated responsibilities. In other words, this new role should not be conceived of as simply an assistant to the executive director, responsible for filling in gaps. Concretely, we suggest that the executive team consider a job description for this new person that might include principal executive responsibility for some (certainly more than one) of the following:

(a) Designing and overseeing an ongoing Institute-wide strategic planning process that integrates planning efforts across program areas and links them with other institutional and managerial systems and needs. This does not mean that the person responsible for this would actually do the Institute's planning, but rather would become the principal architect and operational impetus behind the planning process.

(b) Designing and implementing an ongoing internal learning process to ensure that knowledge and models generated in one part of the Institute's program are communicated, understood, and, where appropriate, used in other parts of the program; and to identify needs for professional skills development among the Institute's professional program staff and look for ways to address those needs.

(c) Designing and overseeing the execution of a more diversified resource mobilization strategy as outlined in a subsequent subsection of these recommendations.

(d) Designing and supervising a more strategically conceived and professionally executed communications strategy (see below).

The purpose of creating such a position would be to support and complement the efforts of the other members of the Management Committee. Ideally, this person would not usurp or replace the executive director in any of his strategic leadership or external representation capacities, but would rather liberate his time for the Institute's most pressing leadership priorities.

- **Planning and programming capacity**

We feel that this may be our most important recommendation. The Institute urgently needs to conceive and institutionalize a permanent, routine and systematically applied planning capacity to enable it to guide its professional program staff in critical thinking and planning about what they aim to accomplish and how. Until and unless the Institute is substantially more financially independent, the institution of such a planning capacity will not entirely eliminate the reactive and donor-driven nature of the Institute's current program, but it will enable the Institute to more deliberately craft its discussions with donors to negotiate support for a more coherent, results-oriented program.

This planning process should be structured to clarify and generate enthusiastic endorsement of the Institute's mission from staff, board members, constituents and donors. It should be driven by a shared set of explicit assumptions about how such disparate activities as research, training, public debate, lobbying, technical assistance, institutional support, media activities and other key elements of the Institute's programmatic toolbox work together to produce the specific immediate, intermediate and long-term results that the Institute has defined as important. At the level of individual programs, the planning team (however constituted and led -- see leadership section above) should provide guidance and good-faith but critical feedback to individual program area directors and program officers regarding the internal

coherence of their assumptions of their models of change (as discussed earlier).

The planning process should set aside several weeks of cumulative effort each year (not all at once), and should be carefully integrated with institutional learning efforts, as it should itself be in essence a powerful means for extracting lessons from the previous year's program experience. It is much more than a collective budgeting exercise, but it should be carefully integrated with budgeting and financial projections for the coming year.

The general and area-specific action plans resulting from the planning process should be written and disseminated among staff, board members and selected donors and other constituents for discussion and feedback, and should become documents of reference for Management Committee meetings during the year to discuss whether proposed initiatives conform to the year's plan. Initiatives that do not so conform should have to satisfy a higher threshold level of intrinsic merit and viability to be considered for implementation.

- **Institutional learning**

The Management Committee should assign some senior program staff person (perhaps the Associate Director suggested above) to design and implement an Institute-wide strategy for communicating lessons learned and for addressing important gaps in staff program skills or knowledge. This strategy might include, for example:

(a) Monthly program staff meetings (open to administrative staff as well) in which program designs and plans are presented for critical discussion with staff from other program areas. The Management Committee may wish to

schedule such meetings before it has approved a new program or initiative, to harvest critical feedback from diverse programs before making a decision.

(b) Regular informal presentations for all Institute staff by consultants, visiting scholars and permanent program staff on research and activities currently in progress. Too often, visiting experts come and leave without having spoken to any but a handful of their direct task managers.

(c) An ongoing process for identifying critical professional skill or information needs and addressing them with ad hoc, outsourced or in-house training efforts.

(d) A benchmarking effort to identify how other academic and program-oriented institutions have managed to create effective enabling environments for ongoing learning. A wealth of new material has been published in the past decade about how to create "learning organizations" and has been applied with varying degrees of success in hundreds of organizations in many countries. (A good start might be the highly regarded "The Fifth Discipline: the Art and Practice of the Learning Organization," by Peter M. Senge, Director of the Center for Organizational Learning at MIT's Sloan School of Management.) A brief focused consultancy to identify and assess the applicability to the Institute of the best of these initiatives would be a worthwhile undertaking.

- **Resource mobilization**

We strongly feel that this is an area of institutional development reform that should not be simply left to the existing Management Committee team. Current executive and program staff have done and should continue to do a

very good job of maintaining constructive relationships with the Institute's current donor base, but that is simply not enough.

Fund raising has become a very sophisticated professional specialization, and has spawned in the last 20 years scores of new ways of generating resources from diverse constituencies. Apart from the fact, as we perceive it, that current executive staff lack the required training or experience in these skills, they are simply overburdened with their many other tasks and cannot be expected to dedicate the time and resources to this critical function that the task will require.

On the other hand, this is probably not a task that can simply be outsourced to an established resource mobilization firm or professional. The nature of the Institute's mission is sufficiently unique, complicated and sensitive as to suggest that the principal coordinator of communicating this mission to potential contributors should be someone who is very much involved in and aware of the substance and subtleties of the Institute's work.

For that reason, we urge serious consideration of recruiting and seeking funding for a senior resource mobilization professional (a development officer) who should be an active member of the Management Committee and should be principally dedicated to this function. That person could (and should, unless she/he has considerable applied experience) rely on the services of an outside consultant or firm for help in the development of specific fund raising activities as needed, but the core function of resource mobilization should be integrated (not outsourced) as a key component of the senior management team.

- **Financial management**

The Institute should contact the Support Center, the Management Assistance Group or some other prominent nonprofit management support institution to identify sources of specialized financial management software programs, available in Spanish, that meets the very distinctive needs of the Institute. Otherwise, this management function appears to be well-managed, in our opinion.

- **Human resource development**

We commend the Institute on its recent efforts in this area, but would like to suggest that the Director of Administration and Finance contact an organization like the Support Center or the Management Assistance Group to identify a small pool of human resources specialists with solid experience in international human resource planning and management. Other sources of recommendations may be the human resource managers in large international non-governmental organizations (CARE, for example, has a highly qualified team at its headquarters in Atlanta). From this pool, the Institute should select a knowledgeable consultant to review the Institute's proposed new human resource plans and make concrete suggestions for improvements. This source should also be able to suggest ways to benchmark the salary and benefit ranges and levels presented in the plans and make appropriate suggestions.

- **Communications and information**

The Institute needs a strategy for integrating and coordinating the many different media by means of which it should present its lessons to different audiences. Concretely, we suggest:

(a) Assigning the overall coordination of this function to a senior manager (perhaps the Associate Executive Director mentioned above). This person should be senior enough to be able to interact effectively with other members of the Management Committee.

(b) Develop a more cost-effective, broader-impact strategy for publishing and distributing Institute output. Benchmark the practices of other regional academic institutions and learn how they identify and assess potential markets; interact with existing academic, trade and commercial publishers; take advantage of national and international distribution channels to reach non-traditional (for the Institute) markets. This task may reasonably be outsourced to a knowledgeable consultant, though the consultant's recommendations should be thoroughly vetted with senior staff to ensure acceptance and eventual compliance.

(c) Develop and integrate into the workplans (quehacer) of each program strategies and tools for effectively and routinely bringing Institute activities and products to the attention of mass media. The work of the Institute is intrinsically newsworthy but underreported. We hesitate to recommend at this point the addition to the payroll of another person who would coordinate media relations, but it may be a measure worth discussing with key donors to see if they would be willing to underwrite an experiment along these lines.

(d) Engage serious professional expertise in the design of strategic uses of the Internet for assistance in redesigning the Institute's Internet presence. Current Institute computer staff lack background and expertise in the conceptual and operational design of Internet services that take full advantage of this powerful new medium.