

'1'

PNABH 979  
71581

THE ROLE OF PRIVATE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM  
IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

G.M. FELICIANO <sup>1/</sup>

At the First Inter-American Conference on Latin American Volunteer Programs held at Buenos Aires on September 6-10, 1965, "the question of the role of volunteers in community development was discussed on the basis of the generally accepted definition of community development, "as a process in which the efforts of the people are linked with those of their government in the attempt to better the socio-economic condition of communities." The role of the volunteer was conceived as: supporting the government; supporting the people; and functioning as a stimulating agent between both partners in community development programs.

"Regarding support to governments, the conferees agreed that volunteers will usually not be in the position to participate in the coordinative function of governments. This is why volunteers will generally be utilized for their technical qualifications. They will have a transmitting function by helping to explain and to relay the government's viewpoint to the community.

"With respect to support to communities, one of the basic objectives of community development is that people develop an interest in their own communal affairs and that they acquire a feeling of self-reliance in solving their own problems. Therefore, common questions for volunteers in community development in Latin America are: Can volunteers contribute to this kind of mental growth and change of attitudes? Should their emphasis be on material accomplishments, such as, the completion of a project or should they rather concentrate on the social aspects of promoting the initiative of the community itself?

"Regarding their role as a potential stimulating link between government and communities, the volunteer sent and supported by the government and accepted by the community in which he is working, may often serve as a binding agent providing a dialogue between government and people. The felt needs of a community may thus be made better known in order to initiate joint actions."

From these we gather that the roles of two types of volunteers in community development were discussed, namely, the volunteer coming from a private volunteer organization and the volunteer sent and supported by the government. At this time we are only

---

<sup>1/</sup>  
President, Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement

concerned with the former and note with interest the agreement reached in the Latin American Conference that these types of volunteers may not usually be in a position to participate in the coordinative function of the government.

In addition, it would be of importance to us to study working Paper No. 2 of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, Working Group on Rural and Community Development, organized by the United Nations' Secretary-General, entitled "A Forward Look in Community Development." Several reasons are noted in this paper why community development programs may not yet have made their fullest impact, among which are:

1. The lack of sufficient attention to the economic processes underlying development;
2. The need for a new concept of "community";
3. The need to reconcile concepts of consensus and individuality, particularly the need to increase concentration on the creation of opportunities in which and by which the individual might develop his particular aptitudes;
4. The need for more emphasis on internal social mobility and for encouraging it at every opportunity;
5. The need to further integrate community development into national development. This has already been recognized in a number of countries;
6. The need for greater recognition of the importance of communication in community development;
7. The need for strengthening of local institutions;
8. The need for governmental action to create conditions that will ensure the effectiveness of local action.

In addition, it would be well to note at this state that most private volunteer organizations in the Philippines, and I am sure this is true with other Asian countries as well, do not confine their activities entirely in community development or certain phases thereof but, also to other similar and related activities having earlier discovered the weaknesses mentioned in the U.N. working paper.

If the suggestions of the U.N. working paper are finally accepted and implemented, it can readily be seen that the term "community development" will no longer be adequately descriptive of this branch

of human activity. It is therefore suggested that to keep this conference one step ahead of the U.N. and in view of the additional reasons mentioned above, Committee "B's" discussions could be of greater significance and value to the conference, if extended to similar or related fields. For "whether it be community development, or rural reconstruction, or mass education, or extension, or fundamental education, or rural development, or social development, all of these have basic elements in common, namely:

- The concept of self-help;
- The initiative comes from the people themselves and not imposed from outside;
- The process of stimulation by a change agent- the community development or rural reconstruction worker;
- The employment of trained personnel; and
- The utilization of techniques and approaches to get cooperative support from all sectors."

At the South Regional Workshop on Professional Education in Community Development of the ECARE held in Bangkok on December 7-17, 1965, it was agreed that the aspects of community development in which the voluntary agencies have a unique role to play are in experimentation, demonstration, training and research, either through establishment of pilot projects, assumption of duties in entire or aspects of existing projects, technical and financial assistance, etc. This is confirmed by a preliminary study made by the PACD in the Philippines, as follows:

"Private community development agencies operating in the Philippines can contribute a lot to the community development movement in this country. Such agencies - PRRM, OB and World Neighbors, can undertake research studies on new methods and techniques. Having their own funds, and with their own technicians, they can well afford to experiment in new methods and approaches that could promote effective implementation of community development programs. Unhampered by government procedures and inflexibility, these agencies can pioneer in many undertakings which PACD would be unable to engage in. The field of community development is wide open for the discovery of new techniques and approaches which could be incorporated in the cooperative community development plan.

"Private agencies should receive more encouragement from the CD Program. They should be coopted into the national plan of community development."

### The Role of PRRM

Established in 1952, PRRM is playing a unique role in community development in the Philippines. For PRRM's initial success was one of the important factors that convinced the late President Magsaysay to establish the government's owned community development program by organizing the PACD.

PRRM conducts an integrated four-fold program of livelihood, health, education and self-government in over 200 villages in the Philippines. This is done through a rural reconstruction worker who is carefully selected from among college graduates and trained to carry out this program with the assistance of a small group of technical experts and associates who have been selected from among the leading scientists and university professors and given a period of orientation by working and living right in the villages themselves.

PRRM feels that it has a four-fold role in community development namely:

1. To undertake experimentation, demonstration, and research studies on new methods and techniques in community development through the establishment of pilot projects. For instance, it was PRRM's experiments in 1952 which led to the enactment of The Barrio Council Law giving a measure of local autonomy to Philippine villages for the first time in history.
2. To assist the government and other agencies in the training of their personnel in community development. Local training has been provided for Armed Forces Civic Action Workers, Peace Corps Volunteers, and various church rural workers. Assistance has been given to the PACD in the training of third-country community development workers. PRRM also provides full field training facilities for foreign trainees of the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, a private movement organized to establish and provide training for private rural reconstruction movements all over the developing world.
3. To provide an avenue through which the private sector in the Philippines can contribute financially, materially, and otherwise to the total national community development program.
4. To provide full community development programs for certain selected geographical areas in the Philippines, thus leaving the government free to concentrate its efforts in other areas.

### The Role of OBI

"OB premises its operations on the belief that the application of humanity and brotherhood is the best approach to man's economic, social and spiritual growth.

"It starts with the search for leader elements in a community and backstops them with the technical assistance rendered by members of a multi-professional team (a doctor, a nurse, an agriculturist, a home technologist, a mechanic electrician, and a CD or social worker) in cooperation with either government or private agencies existing in the area.

"With these leader elements and their families, OB evolves a program of income generation utilizing local skills and available raw materials in the area, the net result of which is enhanced leadership through increased family productivity. As these pockets of production draw in more participants or other cooperating families, OB's circle of involvement widens in the community.

"Where acceptance becomes a problem, particularly in backward areas, OB utilizes the medical approach to provide entree to projects designed to improve the life and livelihood of the people. A public health program which springs from this approach is further integrated into a food production program, home and community welfare services, and training. One activity relates to the other in a meaningly integrated program of human resource development.

"OB's long-range objective is eventually to create in a target area the necessary cooperative spirit and action by which the products resulting from their skills may be upgraded for quality, marketing and distributed to other areas. OB believes that only by pursuing and realizing this objective may lasting results be obtained, and continuity of the projects assured.

"In sum, OB's mission is to encourage economic productivity and inculcate citizen responsibility, which any nation aspiring to freedom must first generate if it is to become politically stable and prosperous..

"At all times OB seeks to inter-relate its efforts with those of government, and to assist in promoting closer relations between citizen and government, and among various agencies and other social elements existing in the community. These entities OB binds together in the name of the cause which it serves, which is that of promoting the brotherhood of men of good will.

"In its overseas operation, OB has over the last 12 years harnessed the skills and talents of Filipino professionals and technicians to help their fellow Asians fight for a better life and a better future as it also continues to test the validity and efficacy of the above concepts.

### The Role of World Neighbors

World Neighbors work on similar basic principles as PRRM and OBI but in a more limited area. Another difference is that it is entirely supported from overseas contributions.

### The Role of WAY

Work-a-Year with the people (WAY) is a civic organization of young volunteers organized to provide the machinery through which young professionals could serve the communities needing their services. It performs three general functions:

- "1. Receiving and acting upon requests for help from Philippine communities.
2. Recruiting volunteers to provide the services needed.
3. Working for the necessary support for the volunteer during his stay in the community -- support from the community itself and from outside.

"Way is neither a charitable movement nor an aid program in the widely understood sense. The volunteer is expected to render his services for a certain period of time; in return the community is expected to provide for the volunteer's upkeep during his stay there and pay for his services in cash or in kind."

### The Role of MARIA

Medical Aid to Rural Indigent Areas (MARIA) "is an activity of the Philippine Medical Association to bring physician services to doctorless communities of the Philippines because it has been realized that almost half of the total population of the Philippines living in geographically remote and inaccessible rural areas are devoid of medical services; that physicians, owing to their high standard of living and culture and desire for professional advancement, are not encouraged to settle in these areas and tend to congregate in urban centers with better facilities for practice and expectation of better economic income.

"The philosophy behind the project is that, if medical security can be assured in a community on an objective of permanency and with the spirit of cooperative endeavor by the physician and the people of the community, greater headway can be attained in the socio-economic uplift of the community so that, eventually, physicians would be induced to spontaneously migrate into these rural areas and, therefore, hasten economic progress.

"The physician's influence generated by his humanitarian dedication, his effectivity in saving lives and protecting the health of the community, is a "foot in the door" of community confidence and life through which other agencies of development can enter with the leadership symbolized by the physician. Since economic stability and professional armamentarium are necessary for any young graduate to establish his beachhead in these communities, the Philippine Medical Association has raised funds by voluntary subscription from the public, from business establishments, from international agencies, to underwrite the basic honorarium of P150.00 a month an initial basic medical and surgical equipment and a continuous supply of drugs. In order to prevent mendicancy, the MARIA physician is accepted by the community to pay whatever they can for his services including drugs, so that the project can be self-sufficient and the physician would be induced to remain among them with a little private practice.

"As soon as he has established his influence in the community, the physician begins to determine the community projects which may be undertaken cooperatively and collectively by the people to elevate their sanitary and health conditions, as well as projects that would increase economic income. He may do this by himself or with the cooperation of community leaders such as the priest, the teachers, the barrio organization, or of other agencies such as the PACD, which has recently decided to assist the MARIA project. In this way, the physician as the symbol of leadership, coordinates the efforts of uplift in the "bayanihan" spirit. When the people improve their economic income and their spiritual and moral outlook, the physician begins to earn more and he is induced to stay longer in the community.

#### The Role of NFWC

The National Federation of Women's Clubs of the Philippines (NFWC) "is a non-partisan, non-sectarian national organization of women welded together for God, Country, and Home to promote mutual understanding and cooperation among women through the women's clubs and between women's clubs and other organizations. To this end, it encourages and guides the local clubs to undertake activities for the common welfare especially of women and children; stimulates interest in community development; and fosters international amity and goodwill.

"Through the women's clubs, it reaches about 1,235 towns and numerous barrio clubs which are directly affiliated to the provincial federation.

"Each club is formed so as to provide the community with an organized group which can always be depended upon to promote all movements for the betterment of life, national, international and local.

#### "Concrete/Methodology

A. The NFWC uses the community organization method in its efforts to stimulate interest in community development.

B. Social group work is resorted to in the Youth Center projects.

C. The social welfare activities of the Federation are preventive rather than remedial. Individuals are helped to help themselves so that they do not become relief cases. Often, material relief deadens initiative, develops dependence, cultivates passivity and makes people give up the struggle too easily.

D. The NFWC believes in the dignity and worth of the individual and his right to self-determination.

E. It believes in the One-World idea and promotes international friendship and goodwill through the exchange of letters, cultural ideas and scientific information with women of other nations and countries.

F. The NFWC believes in the "teamwork approach" in its various services to the community. It involves the various agencies in the community in order to adequately meet the various areas of concern."

#### The Role of CRS and CWS

The Catholic Relief Service (CRS) and Division of Church World Service (CWS) have basically similar operations in the field of community development and support a growing number of voluntary work projects including:

"Irrigation and Drainage Systems

Bridges and Road Construction

School Building Construction

Construction of Fish Ponds

Road Construction

Community Water-Sealed Toilets

Water Impounding

Community Center and Library

Spring Development

Reforestation."

Time will not permit me to mention the many dozens of other organizations which are playing important and vital roles in community development in the Philippines. Their combined contributions have been invaluable in the progress of this nation.

---

Presented by Mr. G. M. Feliciano, President, Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (Member, Philippine Delegation) before the FIRST ASIAN CONFERENCE ON VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS, Manila.)