



EVALUATION OF THE AID SPECIAL
DEVELOPMENT FUNDS PROGRAM

Final Report on the Evaluation

Arlette Pichardo, M.Sc.

Coordinator

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PRESENTATION

On August 8th Arlette Pichardo-Muñiz, M.Sc., and a group of professionals of the Master's Degree Program on Economic Policy for Central America and the Caribbean (Universidad Nacional) were hired (see purchase order # 515-4000179-00) to evaluate the Agency for International Development's Special Development Funds program (SDF), previously known as Funds for Community Self-Improvement. The work began that very day with the cooperation of Flora Ruiz, Chuck Maffett (Director of the program), Patricia Brenes (secretary), and Ginger Waddell who also participated in some of the meetings.

In compliance with the purchase order, we are pleased to present this final report in which the comments and suggestions of Mrs. Flora Ruiz have been included.

According to the proposed methodology which had been previously presented to the AID and approved by its officials, Arlette Pichardo -as coordinator of the project- was responsible for the design of the methodology employed in the evaluation¹. Two task forces were organized under her supervision. One was responsible for the design and selection of the sample -Keynor Ruiz, Gerardo Jiménez y Carlos Conejo-, and the other for the preparation of the instruments -Edmundo Castro, Leiner Vargas y Rafael Díaz-. The task forces did the field work and wrote the respective reports, which were then reviewed by the coordinator. Based on her analysis and interpretation, she prepared the documents for the final report, with the valuable cooperation of the Carlos Conejo and Keynor Ruiz. The latter was also responsible for designing the graphs used in the presentation of the data and for publishing the final version of the report.

The report will follow this order:

Executive summary.

1. Purpose of the program evaluated.
2. Objectives of the evaluation and the procedure used.
3. Findings and conclusions.
4. Main recommendations.
5. Lessons derived from the experience.

¹ The methodology used in the evaluation was based on:
Pichardo Muñiz, Arlette. Evaluación del Impacto Social: el valor de humano ante la crisis y el ajuste. Maestría en Política Económica para Centroamérica y el Caribe; Editorial Humanitas, Argentina, 1993.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The main purpose of the AID Special Development Funds program was to provide financial aid for needy communities or organized groups so that they could carry out small social or economic development projects. The intention was to help them improve the living conditions in those poor rural communities through projects to build rural water supply systems, health, education and nutrition centers, schools and school dining rooms, multi-purpose community halls, bridges and culverts, as well as other projects to raise funds.
2. The main objectives of the evaluation were:
 - a. To assess the results of the SDF program and measure the program's socioeconomic impact on Costa Rican communities.
 - b. To make suggestions, based on the evaluation, about the SDF program so that other development institutions can establish similar programs.
3. The procedure was based on an in-depth analysis of 30 projects selected at random. The following were the main criteria used to design the sample: chronological order of implementation, type of project and province. Thus, the selection has guaranteed that the sample is representative. In addition, information about the program was checked, and meetings were held with AID officials.
4. The key aspects included in the analysis were: the current state of the project, the negative and positive impact of the projects perceived by the communities, benefits for surrounding communities, factors which contributed to the success or failure of the projects, and the important influence of Peace Corps volunteers motivating the participants and promoting the projects.

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5. As a guide for the evaluation, standard instruments were used for interviewing managers, administrators and the current beneficiaries of the project, as well as officials from institutions related with the development of the projects.
 6. Among the main conclusions, the Evaluating team wishes to highlight the fact that the AID-SDF program has fulfilled its objectives.
 7. A relatively high number of projects are still operating; however, some of them have modified their original goals.
 8. The facilities of 59% of the projects currently under way included in the sample project are in excellent condition; this is directly related to the quality of the material used in their construction.
 9. In 90% of the projects, their impact on the community can be viewed in terms of improving both material and non-material living conditions; in 30% of the projects, community organization has been improved.
 10. One of the main positive results is the sense of achievement felt by the communities; a negative result is mismanagement. Other negative aspects include the high costs of some water supply projects; also, there have been some complaints (although not too many) about the lack of support from the corresponding institutions and about problems with community organization for maintenance of the works which have been built.
 11. There are also unplanned positive results such as a high amount of participation of women in the construction as well as in the management and development of the projects.
 12. In spite of the achievements, in some projects it was difficult to keep the community organized. The execution of the projects was affected by planning problems referring to the size and cost of the projects, lack of institutional support, access difficulties, and mismanagement, which in one of the projects evaluated implied a misappropriation of funds. The continuity of the projects has been affected by the inadequate maintenance of the works and by natural phenomena.

13. The positive and negative impact cannot be exclusively attributed to the AID-SDF program. The support and cooperation of other institutions must also be acknowledged.
14. Demonstrative effects were observed in 40% of the projects, and in 60% benefits were derived for neighboring communities.
15. In none of the projects evaluated has there been any indication that the interviewees consider the participation of volunteers as a negative aspect. However, some had not thought about it or they did not remember what their participation had consisted of. When the volunteer's participation was considered positive, the reasons given were that the volunteers helped solve problems among members by harmonizing the different interests, guiding the initiatives of the community and motivating its participation.
16. One of the main suggestions was that a program like the one evaluated is important to support poor, small, remote communities as a complement to the efforts made by organized groups to carry out health, education and communication projects which will make a significant contribution toward fulfilling the community's needs.
17. Fund-raising projects should not be included in programs like the one evaluated.
18. It is desirable and necessary for projects to be coordinated with other institutions, but the latter should not be held responsible for their execution and maintenance. The community must be in charge of managing, developing and continuing the projects.
19. It is recommended that the administration period be longer than one year in order to take better advantage of the experiences derived from the work.
20. The participation of Peace Corps volunteers should be characterized by a positive interaction with the community, and it should be organized regionally, according to the communities' need for support.

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21. The main lesson learned from the experience is that the overall success of the projects depends mainly on the community's level of organization, as well as how consolidated and legitimate the institution or authority which manages the project may be; this then becomes the project's driving force. It also depends on its capacity to eventually become responsible for the administration, development and continuity of the project.
 22. This also means that for the projects to be successful, the idea should originate in the community and be based on its own real needs; in addition, the community must have an adequate management capacity to make the proposals feasible. Thus the characteristics of the project will be appropriate to satisfy the needs from which it originated.
 23. The second important lesson is that each project has its own logic and differences, which must be taken into account when planning and allocating funds.
 24. The third lesson is that the poorer, the smaller and the more remote the beneficiary community is, the greater the impact will be since it does not have access to other sources of support. Thus, these criteria must not be overlooked when identifying priorities for fund allocation.

BEST AVAILABLE

1. Purpose of the Program Evaluated

According to the documents supplied by the AID Special Development Funds program (SDF), the purpose of the program is as follows:

"Provide financial aid for needy communities or organized groups so that they can carry out small economic or social development projects. This is an effort to improve the living conditions of poor rural communities through projects in the following fields:

HEALTH: construction of rural water supply systems, health centers, as well as education and nutrition centers.

EDUCATION: building or remodeling schools, school dining rooms, and multi-purpose community halls.

COMMUNICATIONS: small projects, such as bridges and culverts.

FUND-RAISING:

The program was conceived in 1978, but it did not become a formal program until 1984. Throughout the development of the program, priorities regarding the type of project to be supported have changed. During the last few months, priority has been given to water supply projects because water is considered vital to improving the communities' health and living conditions.

The program offered a maximum of US\$ 5000 (the equivalent in colones to five thousand dollars) to finance the projects. In addition, the community was to provide an equal amount of money.

2. Objectives of the Evaluation and Procedure Used

According to the reference terms stipulated by AID, the objectives for the evaluation of the SDF program were the following:

- a. Carry out an evaluation based on the results of the SDF program, and measure the program's socioeconomic impact on Costa Rican communities.
- b. Give suggestions, based on the evaluation, about the SDF program to enable other development institutions to establish similar programs.

The core of the Evaluation Program, also according to the AID reference terms, was an in-depth analysis of 30 projects chosen at random. The projects were selected from all the categories (health centers, water systems, communications (bridges and roads), construction of schools, fund-raising and multi-purpose community halls), and the different regions of the country were taken into consideration. To select the projects, a random sample was designed which was representative of all the projects; therefore, the results of the field work can be applied to all the projects financed through the program. There were also work meetings with AID officials, and some information related to the program was reviewed.

The key aspects included in the analysis were the following:

- a. Current state of the project.
- b. Its impact (positive and negative) as perceived by the communities as a result of the projects.
- c. Benefits of the projects to surrounding communities.
- d. Factors which contributed to the success or failure of the projects.
- e. Significant influence of Peace Corps volunteers in motivating the community and promoting the projects.

As a guide for the evaluation, standard instruments were used in order to interview planners, administrators and current beneficiaries of the projects, as well as officials from institutions related to the development of the projects. The annexes of the present report include the details of the procedure used, the criteria and selection process for the 30 projects analyzed in depth, a list of the projects and the instruments utilized to collect, organize and process the information.

3. Findings and Conclusions

The Evaluating Team considers that the fundamental purpose of the Special Development Funds Program (SDF) was fulfilled satisfactorily. One indication of this is the fact that since the beginning of the program in 1978, the Program has provided financial support for 1028 small economic or social development projects carried out by organized groups from poor communities in different regions of the country.

According to the information provided by the last Director of the Program, very few projects are incomplete at the time of this writing; this was proved through field trips. Actually, only two of the thirty projects evaluated in depth are still under way, and there are indications which show that they will soon be completed. In fact, although the construction has not yet been completed in one of the projects, it is already providing services.

a. Current State of the Projects

Concerning the current state of the projects: of the thirty selected in the sample, it was found that three of them are not operating, and that three others -although still under way- have different objectives from those originally proposed. Two of the three projects which are no longer functioning were fund-raising projects and the other was a school which was completely destroyed in the Limon earthquake. Of the three which modified their original objectives, two are fund-raising projects, and they are still operating, but they are managed privately, not by the

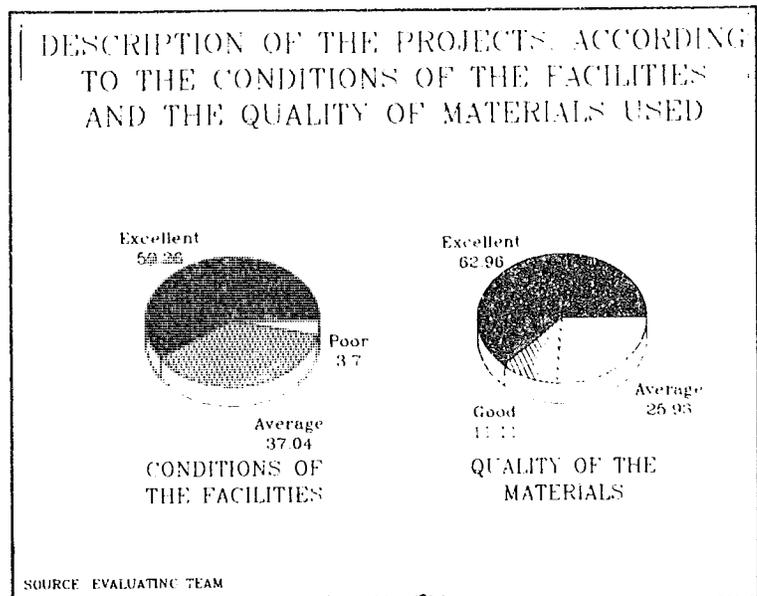
community; and the other project modified the use of its facilities, although it still retains the same community orientation.

If we project the sample output to the total number of projects, it would be possible to estimate -considering the sample error- that around 10% of the projects financed by the program may not be functioning; this is a relationship of about two to one in fund-raising projects in relation to the other types of projects. This proportion becomes even more relative, if we take into account that the fund-raising projects represent two-thirds of the total of non-operating projects. It is well known that this type of project cannot always develop the required strength to be inserted in the market successfully. However, it is necessary to point out that in the case of fund-raising projects, even if they fail, there is a net profit for the beneficiaries, in terms of learning and development of their organizational ability.

Of the operating projects, which represent 90% of the total sample, 59% have excellent facilities, 37% average facilities and the remaining 4% are in very bad condition. The indicators used to define the conditions of the facilities include leaks (or lack of them) in the roof, cracks in the walls or leaks in water tanks. The conditions and regularity of maintenance were also taken into account. The projects with average facilities fall into this category because they require some type of maintenance; while those considered in very bad condition need to be reconstructed almost entirely.

GRAPH No. 1

In order to complete the chart on the current state of the projects, the quality of the materials used to build them was evaluated. The following are the results obtained: 63% were considered excellent, 11% were good and 26% average. No project had materials classified as very poor quality. The factors evalu-



ated were whether the walls were made of concrete or wood; if the wood was first -class or second- class quality, if it had been infested or if it had not been cut properly, if the roofs were made of corrugated metal or cardboard; if the water tanks had been plastered and had no leaks; or the type of gravel used in roads and the quality of the material used to build bridges (steel and concrete) was considered.

Of the water supply projects, 89% are in excellent condition, and only one project has been classified as being in average condition. It has been observed that this is in direct relation to the type of materials used to construct the water supply system. Actually, 89% of projects in excellent condition correspond to the same percentage of excellent construction materials used. On the other hand, the average water system was built with good quality materials, but they were not the most appropriate for that type of construction. Also, it is important to highlight the good quality of the water.

Of the schools constructed, 43% are in excellent condition, and 29% in average condition. One school is under construction and the other one, as mentioned above, does not exist because it was razed by an earthquake. According to an interview with the last Director of the SDF Program, measures have been taken for the new constructions to be earthquake-proof so that it will not happen again. Concerning the quality of the materials, 57% of the schools evaluated were built with excellent quality materials, and 43% with good quality materials.

75% of the bridges and roads are in excellent condition; this corresponds to 75% of the projects which used excellent quality materials. The remaining 25% is in very bad condition, and also corresponds to 25% of the projects which used materials of average quality.

In regard to the fund-raising projects (considering only the existing ones), they are in poor condition, again in direct correspondence to the quality of materials used in their construction.

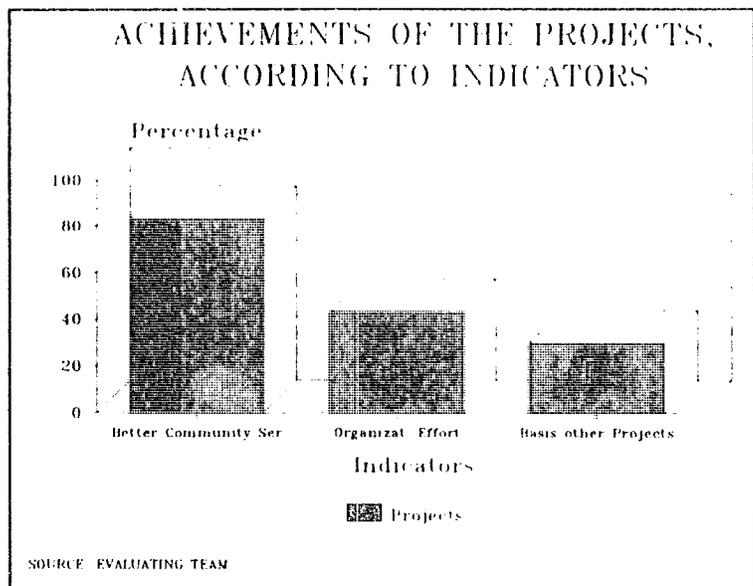
Concerning the other types of projects (health centers, school dining rooms, multi-purpose halls for the community, etc.) there is a linear relationship between their current condition and the quality of materials used in their construction, and the poor maintenance provided must also be considered.

b. *Positive and Negative Impact Perceived by the Communities
as a Result of the Projects*

The impact of 90% of the evaluated projects is perceived as an improvement in the communities, and in 30% it is seen as an improvement in community organization. The improvement in the material living conditions of the population (health, food, and basic services), was achieved through health centers, water systems, schools, dining rooms and the construction of bridges and roads. The multi-purpose community halls have made important contributions in non-material aspects which affect living conditions and the quality of life, such as recreation and culture, and for dispersed communities they became meeting centers where new initiatives to improve the community could originate. The fund-raising projects allowed the families' standard of living to raise temporarily, and in some cases they enabled cooperative methods of production to develop.

GRAPH No. 2

These appraisals have been corroborated with the statements of those interviewed. 83% stated that the projects helped improve community services; 43% felt that they helped strengthen organization; and 30% said the projects were the basis for initiating other projects. This is better seen in the



multiplying effects derived from the projects, which are mentioned below.

Referring to the school projects, it was possible to cover a larger area, especially in remote places where otherwise it would have been more difficult to construct classrooms. The school dining rooms and CEN centers did not only make it possible to provide the children with better food service, but also to continue offering it. In fact, in all of the projects it was observed that they have developed the conditions which will enable them to continue operating; some even showed signs of additional improvement and expansion.

According to those interviewed, the water systems which have provided safe drinking water have helped improve the population's health by controlling the causes of gastrointestinal diseases. In addition, other risks were eliminated since the population no longer has to bring water from a river or from a well dug near the house, as was common before the construction of the water supply systems.

The bridges and roads improved communication between communities, thus facilitating the transportation of products and people.

In the case of fund-raising projects, regardless of whether or not they are still operating, more is now known about productive activity. Through these projects, the costs of this type of learning activities were covered. In the case of those projects which are no longer operating, several were useful as the basis for

designing larger-scale productive projects, but with a different orientation for production.

FIGURE No. 1

Despite the goals achieved, there were problems of maintaining the community organization. The execution was affected by planning problems: regarding size because population growth (17%) had not been taken into consideration and regarding the costs of the projects (13%). It was also affected by a lack of

| LIMITATIONS OF THE PROJECTS, ACCORDING TO INDICATORS | |
|---|--------------------|
| <u>INDICATORS</u> | <u>PERCENTAGES</u> |
| ORGANIZING THE COMMUNITY | 20 00 |
| LACK OF MAINTENANCE | 20 00 |
| INADEQUATE PLANNING | 16 67 |
| HIGH COST OF SERVICES | 13 33 |
| GREATER WORK THAN ESTIMATED | 13 33 |
| LACK OF SUPPORT FROM OTHER INST | 10 00 |
| GREGOGRAPHICAL CONDITIONS | 6 67 |
| POOR MANAGEMENT | 6 67 |
| NATURAL DISASTERS | 6 67 |
| CORRUPTION | 3 33 |

SOURCE: EVALUATING TEAM

institutional support (10%), difficulties in access (7%) and inadequate management (7%) which in one of the cases evaluated implied a misappropriation of funds. The continuity of the projects has been affected by insufficiency in the maintenance of the works (20%) as well as by natural phenomena (7%). These restrictions should be taken into account as a guide for future programs of the same nature as the one evaluated.

Summing up, there are different kinds of impacts which have been felt. Among the positive ones the achievements of the communities can be highlighted; and among the negative ones, the poor management of fund-raising programs which in some cases was decisive for their failure. Other negative issues can be observed, such as in one case of corruption which was detected regarding the

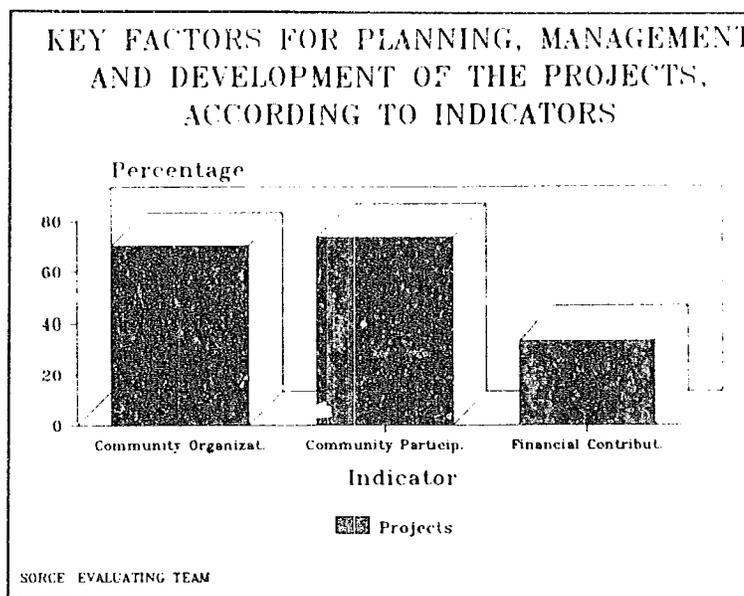
misuse of funds and in the high costs generated by several projects related to the water supply systems which in turn meant higher rates for the users. In addition, there are several -although very few- statements concerning the lack of support from the institutions responsible, and difficulties related to community organization for the maintenance of the completed works.

There are also unplanned positive results such as the high number of woman participants. This can be observed in various forms according to the particular type of project. In some cases they participated directly in the construction of the work, such as the water supply systems; and in other cases, they were very active in community management developing initiatives to generate funds; others participated in both areas.

The impact which has been observed -both positive and negative- cannot be totally attributed to the AID-SDF program. The support provided by other institutions (such as "Acueductos y Alcantarillados," the institution in charge of water supply and sewage -A & A, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation (MOPT), the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Agriculture (MAG), and municipalities) also must be taken into consideration.

GRAPH No. 3

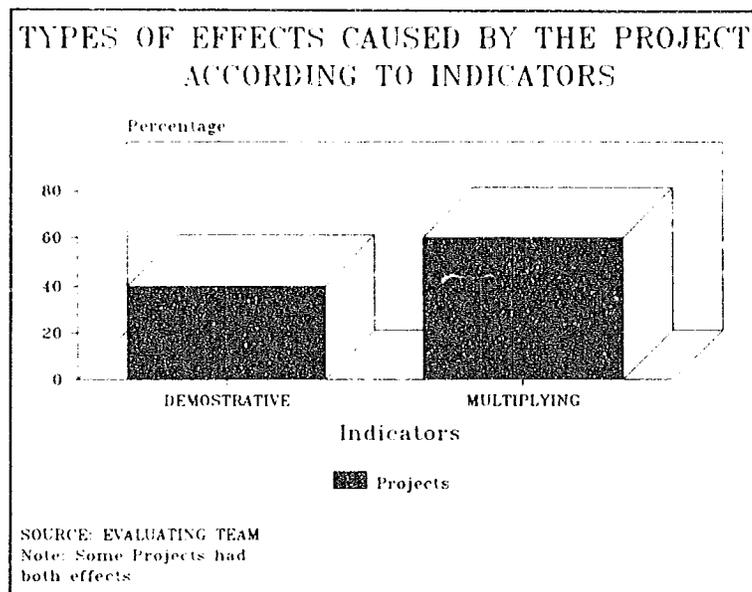
Community participation and organization are the key factors in the generation of impacts, as well as in their permanence. Likewise, the future prospects of the continuity of the projects depend on these factors in 70% of the cases. The organizational capacity of the communities -first as agents of the projects, and



then as executors and administrators- was the decisive factor for the success of the projects. Management ability was favored where there was previous organizational experience, whereas execution and administration were favored where a high level of commitment and responsibility of the organizational body went along with a strong leadership capacity.

c. Benefits of the Projects for Surrounding Communities

GRAPH No. 4



In 40% of the projects visited, clear effects were observed. In addition to the uses for which the projects were designed, other complementary or alternative uses were generated. In 60% of the cases, multiplying effects of other projects were found. In fact, 37% of the evaluated projects had

learned from other projects within their own or neighboring communities, about the possibilities of obtaining support from AID. In several cases, there were projects which had demonstrative as well as multiplying effects.

Schools, school dining rooms and multi-purpose community halls were the types of projects from which the most demonstrative effects were generated. For instance, in several schools, the classrooms are utilized in adult education; some of the dining rooms are used as community dining halls during celebrations and other community activities; and the multi-purpose community halls are used as storage centers.

Regarding the water supply systems, these had a broad multiplying effect not only in the planning of other water supply

systems, but also in the socialization of learning experiences in order to construct and manage them. In addition, schools, bridges and roads had an influence on planning similar ideas in neighboring communities.

**d. Factors Contributing to the Success or Failure of the
Projects**

The main indicator of success in the projects is that in 77% of the cases the need for which they were designed was fulfilled in a way which can be sustained. In another 13% it was also achieved, but only for a short time. Only in one case (3%) was it not carried out at all; and in two cases (7%) it has not been reached yet, because they are still in the process, but it will be achieved as soon as the work is completed. In addition, in 83% of the cases conditions were set up to solve other problems in the communities.

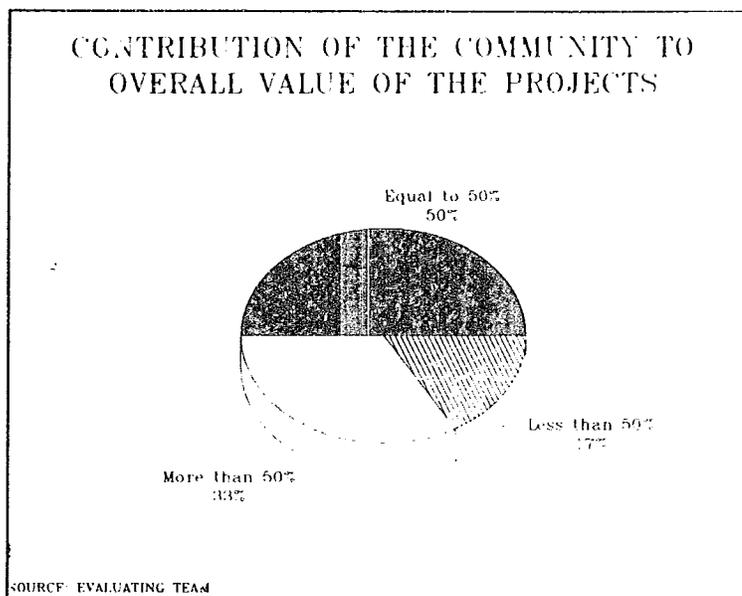
The achievement of fulfilling needs is closely related to the initiators of the projects, and in 87% of the cases it is related to community organization. Similarly, as stated before regarding the impacts achieved, success is bound to the maturity and organizational consolidation of the communities, which are further supported by the ability and experience which their leaders had when they assumed the responsibility for the development of the projects.

The problems concerning continuity and future prospects of the projects are tied to the previous factors, particularly in the case of fund-raising projects in which 75% show that their restrictions

were due to poor management. Possibly with stable and suitable direct technical assistance, this type of problems could have been resolved.

GRAPH No. 5

The community's contribution can also be considered as a decisive element. In all cases this element was present, thus complying with the main guideline of the program which stated that the donations given by the Fund were not to be used to finance a community project completely. They also



They also complied with its philosophy which called for the participation of the local people in the work along with their contribution of half of the resources required. In half of the projects evaluated, the self-help amounted to 50%; in 33% it was over 50%, and only 17% was it slightly less than 50%. In 100% of the cases labor was contributed, and in 50% materials were also provided.

Likewise, the principle which states that communities must make an agreement of cooperation with national public institutions and municipalities was achieved in 70% of the cases. These contributions were made differently: 60% in materials, 33% obtained the transportation of materials, 30% in technical assistance, 17% received a temporary grant for the use of community labor; and 10%

received direct financing. If these results from the sample are used in extrapolation to the total, this could indicate that approximately two-thirds of the projects had some type of institutional support.

The role played by the institutions which gave support to the communities is related to the type of projects. Regarding the water supply systems, the most important agreement was made with "Acueductos y Alcantarillados" (A & A) which contributed both material and technical assistance to 89% of the water supply systems evaluated. In addition, with this type of projects, the aid obtained by a water supply and treatment institution such as A & A is a key element for success, because specialized technical assistance is required, and because the pipes used to carry water are expensive and thus require institutional support.

A more direct type of technical assistance would have prevented some of the errors made by communities in water supply system projects. For example, in 45% of the communities in which projects were evaluated, it was found that these communities have problems with water distribution because population growth was not taken into account. In other communities, 33% of the water systems are facing management problems which lead to high costs and consequently, high rates for the services provided. Such cost levels are linked to the use of production scales which sometimes were over- or underestimated, and to the use of water pumps which consume too much electricity.

Regarding the bridge and road projects, the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation (MOPT) supported 50%, and the

municipalities 25%. This support mainly consisted of providing materials (75%), transporting materials (25%), and lending machinery (50%). The main problem with this type of projects was the lack of institutional support to comply with the established terms to finish the works and for maintenance once they were completed.

Concerning fund-raising projects, in 50% of the cases the Ministry of Agriculture (MAG) had a very active part, providing technical assistance, materials and equipment. Other organizations such as community farming centers also offered support.

Schools, school dining rooms, health centers and multi-purpose community halls obtained help mainly from the Ministry of Public Work and Transportation (MOPT), the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Education, and to a lesser extent, from municipalities. No evidence was found which would indicate that the execution of projects was restricted by the lack of institutional support. In some cases, the problems identified, such as the shortage of teaching material or additional instructors are affecting the continuity of the project, but not its conclusion within the foreseen period.

e. *Important Role of Peace Corps Volunteers, Motivating the
Community and Promoting the Projects*

Peace Corps volunteers participated in 53% of the cases, and did not participate in 47%. When there was participation of Peace Corps volunteers, 63% worked setting up the projects or acting as mediator in the search for funds with the AID; 31% was limited to follow-up visits in the execution of the projects, and the remaining 6% participated in the construction of works.

In none of the projects evaluated are there any signs which show that their participation is considered negative by the interviewees, although in some cases people did not have this on their minds or they did not recall the Peace Corps volunteers' participation. In the cases in which their participation was positive, it was because they helped to solve problems among members of the communities, harmonizing interests, guiding initiatives, and motivating people to participate.

In other cases (30%), their role was appreciated as important when mediating in the continuation of the project. For interviewees, it was very positive that volunteers helped them to take steps, thus permitting them to use a greater amount of time when constructing the work. In another case, the community fondly remembers the volunteer because she had an ability to become a part of the community, she interacted positively with them, taught them English, and became a strong motivating element in generating four different projects in the community.

4. Main Recommendations

In regard to the second objective of the evaluation which was to make recommendations and suggestions about the SDF Program, which other development institutions could use to set up similar programs, and based on the results of the evaluation, the evaluating team states:

- a. The existence of a program similar to the one evaluated is relevant, because in our opinion, it allows the existence of a financing system which complements the community's effort to improve material living conditions and non-material components which affect living conditions and the quality of life. Without these components, access to financing would be much more difficult.
- b. The main objective of any program similar to the one evaluated should be to support needy communities or organized groups as they carry out economic and social development projects, in an effort to improve the conditions of poor rural communities.
- c. To this effect, we recommend that these funds be directed towards small community projects, and not to small projects which form part of larger ones, such as projects for integral development.
- d. Nevertheless, funds must be used for substantial contributions to the communities' development; for instance, financing the construction of a classroom, a school dining room, or a water tank.

e. It is our suggestion that the aid be focussed on communities for which access to another type of external support is clearly limited. That is to say, they should have the following characteristics: be small, poor, remote, and yet possess a high level of organization.

f. Regarding the type of project, it is recommended concentrating the support on three aspects:

HEALTH: construction of rural water supply systems, health centers, as well as education and nutrition centers.

EDUCATION: building or remodeling schools, school dining rooms and multi-purpose community halls.

COMMUNICATION: small projects, such as bridges and culverts.

g. In some cases, water system projects may be planned within a framework of regional strategies and not as isolated projects.

h. It is recommended that in programs like the one evaluated, fund-raising projects should not be included, since due to their nature, they could require an investment of more than US\$ 5000 (five thousand dollars), technical assistance and training related to management, production, marketing and administration of the productive units. Moreover, it is more desirable to finance this type of projects with credit programs and not with donations.

- i. In all cases, the support offered must be directly and clearly combined by the program with the community's contribution and other contributions from the government and municipalities. The policy of US\$1 from AID for US\$1 of community effort is right and should be maintained, since it is a way of carrying out the philosophy of the program.
- j. Coordination with other institutions is both desirable and necessary, but the responsibility of execution and maintenance of projects should not depend on it. Communities are to be responsible for setting up the process as well as for its development and continuity.
- k. An excess of institutional involvement should be avoided, since in the case of small projects, rather than becoming a catalyst, they could be an obstacle to agile, timely execution. This could prevent their complying with the terms set down by AID due to the communities' urgency in satisfying their necessities.
- l. The Management of the program should not be limited to a period of one year. A longer term would be advisable, since it would allow for greater continuity in management guidelines and would favor the internal feedback processes.
- m. Regarding the participation of Peace Corps Volunteers, the regional differences in the interior of the country should be taken into account and their participation should be concentrated in particular areas. Criteria such as a need for organizational support for the community and institutional weaknesses should be considered when placing volunteers.

- n. Regarding the volunteers' influence on motivating the community and promoting the projects, it must be oriented by a positive interaction with the local people. Thus, the community will perceive the volunteers as helping to solve problems when executing projects and not creating necessities which would contribute to these problems.
- o. Information on the existence of the support program should be channeled through school teachers, regional institution employees, organization leaders capable of identifying communities with the required features to be benefited from the program.
- p. When a project is financed, it would be wise to make a detailed profile of the communities, in order to examine in greater depth the evaluations of the effects generated by the projects, both inside the communities as well as in neighboring communities. This would later provide a reference parameter which would serve as a basis for more specific estimates and measurements of the impact.
- q. Finally, it is recommended to retain the policy that those communities which for various reasons cannot fulfill the execution of the project be forced to return the AID's supporting contribution.

5. Lessons Derived from the Experience

Based on an examination of results of the evaluation of the program, the main lessons derived from this experience are the following:

- a. The most important lesson is that the general success of the projects basically depends on the communities' level of organizational development, and the degree of consolidation and legitimacy of the level which creates the initiative of the project. This also becomes the driving force of the project, together with the ability of the group to subsequently take on the management, development and continuity of the project.
- b. This means that for a project to be successful, initiatives must come from communities, according to necessities identified by those communities. They must have an adequate management capacity to generate proposals and make them feasible. Thus each project will have the characteristics necessary to satisfy the needs that it was designed for.
- c. Community participation should be expressed in concrete actions such as participating directly in the construction of works, obtaining additional funds, and/or acquiring resources for the projects to operate adequately.
- d. The second important lesson is that each type of project has its own logic and its own particular characteristics which must be taken into account when planning and allocating funds.

- e. The third is that the smaller, the poorer and the more remote the community is, the greater the impact is on the population benefited, since they are communities which have no access to any other source of support. Therefore, these criteria must not be overlooked when defining priorities for resource allocation.

- f. External agents must not replace the initiatives coming from the communities regarding their projects. The agents' role must be that of facilitators in the processes, harmonizing differences within communities if such differences exist, or channeling the necessary information appropriately.