Effectiveness Initiative: first fruits

Early Childhood Matters

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UNFORTUNATELY TECHNICAL PROBLEMS RESULTED IN DR SHYAM SUNDAR DAS, THE AUTHOR OF 'IN DEFENCE OF THE CHILD IN INDIA' PUBLISHED IN *EARLY CHILDHOOD MATTERS 98,* BEING INCORRECTLY IDENTIFIED AS DR SHAM SUNDER ADS. MY SINCERE APOLOGIES TO DR DAS FOR OUR MISTAKE.
JIM SMALE, EDITOR

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The Effectiveness Initiative: first fruits

Last year, during my first visit to India, when I had the opportunity to visit Bangalore, I met the sculptor John Deveraj, and the group of street children with whom he creates theatre and artistic activities. To me, arriving tired and hot, Bangalore was a city full of dust, polluted with the exhaust of millions of ancient cars. During my stay, however, John and his family and the young people painted a picture of a city full of trees and beautiful buildings – a place in which I would love to live, they assured me. More important, they showed me that it was a city full of enterprising people with achievements behind them and the potential to achieve much more. And, as I learned more from them and learned to look through their eyes too, I was reminded that we see very little at first sight, perhaps because we only notice the obvious, or have preconceptions about what we will find, or are only there to look for what we want to see.

When visiting early childhood programmes, we see the poverty and material needs of the communities in which they are located. Sometimes we see children packed together in precarious childcare centres, or left to their own devices and wandering dangerous streets. This is what forces us to take action, to generate projects and programmes that aspire to change such situations. But it's only when we know the realitites properly that we can understand how to respond.

The EI is investigating how programmes have responded to realities. Each one of the programmes that is participating in the Effectiveness Initiative (EI) has a history of successes and failures, opportunities and difficulties. And every story from these programmes is a treasury of lessons about human nature, and about people's ability to perceive, reflect and understand, and then go on to fight adversity. Within such programmes – programmes that are aimed at the social inclusion of young children – there are thousands of experiences about taking advantage of opportunities and coping with obstacles.

It is these experiences that the EI looks for, describes and analyses in ten projects across the world. Teams of investigators, both specialists within international agencies and people from early childhood development (ECD) programmes, are exploring how the needs of children and their families are met in different contexts. And they are doing that by going beyond the obvious, by putting aside their preconceptions, and by looking at everything that is there rather than selecting and filtering. Overall, each of us in the EI wants to know what lessons we can draw from what these programmes do and how they do it. We want to open and maintain an international dialogue on best practices that takes account of the points of view of a variety of audiences. And we also want to explore methodologies that ensure the participation of the variety of people and institutions that are related to, or affected by, the programmes.

The EI is an investigation that is open and flexible. Many different approaches have been and are being taken; and we have changed the course of the investigation many times, learning as we go. Now, after almost two years of research, exchanges and comparisons, just when we thought we were reaching the end of the road, we have discovered that we have only just begun: as we build new knowledge and understandings, new question arise.

This edition of *Early Childhood Matters* shows the evolution of this process with examples of how distinct understandings have been generated. First, on page 6, Ellen M Ilfeld, in collaboration with the Analytical Group of the EI, reminds us of the initial motivation for the EI. Using a fable, she shows what participants in the EI first came together to look at. She also shows how the process of the EI is discovering a series of factors that could influence projects and programmes; and then offers a commentary on some of these.

The articles that follow show some of the variety of EI tools and strategies that have been used for listening to different voices and for extracting information about each of the projects or programmes. These include: the use of the river analogy that enables participants to construct a visual history of projects in Peru and Colombia; the

India: *SEWA Crèche for 0-3 year olds in Kunjrav village*
photo: Jean-Luc Ray / Aga Khan Foundation ©

machamba (farm land) analogy from Mozambique (page 14) that helps people to analyse the evolution of the escolinhas (community-based ECD sites); the seasonal calendars from the Philippines; meetings and debates from Portugal; different forms of open and unstructured interviews, and the analysis of anecdotes and stories in almost all the teams.

The article by Liliana Godoy (page 16) offers a detailed reconstruction of the steps taken in the process of exploring the programme of the Madres Guías (Guiding Mothers) in Honduras. The design of instruments to collect information, the identification of a working hypothesis, and the investigation that will guide the next steps, play central roles in this.

Participation in the EI project has created space for reflection within organisations and the communities that the projects and programmes serve. Feny de los Angeles-Bautista's description of the use of EI in the Philippines illustrates how a programme can benefit from this space for reflection, using concrete tools that help the community to organise for the benefit of its children (page 22). For his

part, Rui d'Espiney (page 32) discusses how the EI process has been used in Portugal to examine what a project has achieved; thus opening it up to a new phase. In addition, an analysis of the project has revived awareness about issues related to children's social exclusion. More important, it has remotivated the project by reminding it of how and why it came into being.

The EI research process has itself impacted directly on the effectiveness of some of the participating projects and programmes. Each has generated information that is relevant for its own practices and has applied this immediately. For example, SEWA (page 36) has used EI and its proceesses, to bring about improvements in its approaches and operations. Fiorella Lanata's article about the PRONOEI project in Peru (page 38) and Fernando Peñaranda's article about the PROMESA project in Colombia (page 42) show how findings that have emerged from analysing data gathered through open interviews could improve aspects of the current operations of the project. However, in neither case was it enough to merely allow the original analysis and subsequent findings to be applied: first

they were returned to all the people who had provided the data to be considered, challenged, modified and refined in open meetings. Only then were they applied. This process not only demonstrates the extent to which each project was the property and responsibility of all stakeholders, it also demonstrates the degree to which the EI was internalised in those projects.

Fernando Peñaranda's article stresses the importance of a factor that has consistently emerged from all who contributed to the investigation: credibility. Few people involved in development work will be surprised that credibility should emerge as important: the real interest is in how it can be generated and sustained. In that sense, the value of the EI work is clear: it has revealed a wide range of examples of how credibility is naturally established, what militates against it, how it can be reinforced, and how and why it generates success.

Because of its nature, its approaches, it methodologies and its tools, the EI process has raised questions about the role of researchers in programmes. Peter Mwaura (page 47) as the official

evaluator of the Madrasa Resource Centres programme in Kenya, discusses the relationship between a research team and a programme, looking especially at the advantages and disadvantages of being an 'outsider' or an 'insider'. He examines in detail what this means in terms of being able to generate knowledge about the project.

Today, after two years, we are beginning to compare findings across the ten participating projects and programmes. This is revealing thematic affinities – but also that these have a great diversity of local expressions. The people involved in the EI – an international network of consultants and practitioners – have been discovering and documenting the lessons hiding in each project or programme. To bring these findings together, a working group consisting of members of different teams, has started to identify and organise the emerging findings from all the different sites. Early in 2001 two meetings were held of those interested in beginning a cross-site analysis of these findings. Some of the results that emerged from these meetings are outlined in the article by Ellen M Ilfeld (page 53). She illustrates one method for categorising results

using software (Atlas-ti) designed specifically for the analysis of qualitative research. She shows how it is possible to organise data flexibly, allowing concepts to be brought together into many different permutations of related groups of themes (families). She also shows how links can be maintained with the original qualitative data, allowing it to be retrieved and used to tell the real stories that lie behind the code words.

Overall, the research processes at the ten participating projects and programmes continue, generating findings and lessons that will be of use to donors and programme administrators. As they do, we are continuing to learn about learning, about those research processes and about the findings they are producing. Lessons are emerging and are feeding back into the projects that produced them. One major realisation is that one way in which effectiveness can be achieved is by simply creating room for reflection and research within projects. A second realisation is that our original purpose of looking for what makes programmes effective has been complemented: we now see that the Effectiveness Initiative is a rich process in and of itself.

Those of us engaged in the EI are still busily looking and reflecting together. That means that still more lessons will emerge when we complete our work in identifying everything we can about what makes projects effective; when we are further advanced with organising what we are learning; when we make many more comparisons across the participating projects to highlight similarities and contrasts; and when we develop more ways of understanding the significance of complex combinations of factors in a particular situation at a particular time.   ○

Leonardo Yánez
Coordinator Effectiveness Initiative

Emerging maps of effectiveness

Ellen M Ilfeld
in consultation with Tom Lent, Leonardo Yánez, Arelys Yánez, and Judith L Evans

To examine in some depth what makes early childhood programmes work, the Bernard van Leer Foundation launched the Effectiveness Initiative (EI) in January 1999, in partnership with participants in the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development. The question that is being explored within the EI is 'What makes early childhood programmes effective, in a variety of contexts, for diverse participants and stakeholders ranging from children, through parents and community members, to policy makers?'

This article discusses how the processes of the EI are revealing factors that can be significant in influencing project effectiveness; and it lists and discusses a number of these factors.

The motivation for the EI came from the fact that, as increasing numbers of donors are providing funding for early childhood programmes, they are turning to the Foundation for advice about how to invest their money effectively – that is, where to place it so that it would best support young children's growth and development. This is logical: the Foundation has been involved in funding programmes for young children and their families for over 25 years. However, when these donors asked, 'What makes a programme effective?' we found that we could not readily supply an answer.

The evolution of the EI

Beneath this rather imposing mega-question about programme effectiveness, there is another set of questions at the core of what we in the early childhood development (ECD) community do. These include:
What is our work in ECD teaching us? How can we get better at what we do – for the sake of children, and for the sake of personal and organisational accountability?

As the EI was being created we talked with key people in programmes that

many considered effective. Ultimately ten projects joined us in this exploration, all of which have at least a ten-year track record. They represent geographic diversity and are illustrative of a variety of approaches.

In addition to being grounded in the in-depth study of ten specific programmes, the EI is designed to be a cross-site, cross-agency collaboration and exchange that stimulates ongoing dialogue about effective programming. Furthermore, it is designed to test the application of qualitative research methods, well tested in other

development arenas, to the field of ECD. The goals of this effort are two-fold: to gain deeper insights into what makes ECD programmes effective, and to activate international dialogue on effectiveness, that takes us… 'beyond our present scant measures and indicators of programme success.' (Evans and Salole, 1999*). As a result of the work with these ten projects we hope to be able to develop methods and maps for examining other programmes in the future.

To accompany each site in its application of the EI process, teams

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were created consisting of four people per site. The teams were formed of 'insiders' (people related to the project) and 'outsiders' to design, explore, engage stakeholders, plan, implement, coordinate and communicate the process and findings. A Coordination Team was recruited by the Bernard van Leer Foundation to act as the centre of this spider web of exploration, action research, advocacy, communication and dissemination of learning and practice.

Each team began with its own core questions, derived from its reasons for participation in the EI; some used a common Analytical Framework. All teams used and developed participatory methods and tools along the way. Each team engaged the host organisation in the process (to varying degrees). In addition, each team had its own internal dynamic of operating together. Today, teams are at varying points in the process that includes: the setting up of a framework (a plan and way of working together); the gathering of data through the use of qualitative and participatory methods and tools; the analysis of an overwhelming multitude of data; a reflection on

findings and insights with the people with whom the data were gathered; a plan to disseminate and communicate their process and content inside and outside the project; and a plan for advocacy.

As we proceed, we are realising that the journey – and what it is teaching us – is at least as interesting as the destination: answering the original question, 'what is effective?'

At this point we are beginning to think that effectiveness is as elusive as the elephant in the Indian story told by American poet John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887) who based the following poem on a fable that was told in India many years ago.

The Blind Men and the Elephant

It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

The First approached the Elephant,
And happening to fall

Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
'God bless me! but the Elephant
Is very like a wall!'

The Second, feeling of the tusk,
Cried, 'Ho! what have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!'

The Third approached the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
'I see,' quoth he, 'the Elephant
Is very like a snake!'

The Fourth reached out an eager hand,
And felt about the knee.
'What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain,' quoth he;
'Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!'

The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said: 'Even the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a fan!'

The Sixth no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Than, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
'I see,' quoth he, 'the Elephant
Is very like a rope!'

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

The moral of the story:

So oft in theologic wars,
The disputants, I ween,
Rail on in utter ignorance
Of what each other mean,
And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has seen!

This Hindu tale about the six blind men exploring an elephant is often cited to illustrate the idea that we tend to believe that our perceptions about a part of something holds true for the whole thing: when we experience the trunk, or the tail, or the side of the elephant, we conclude that we now know the nature of the whole. In the traditional tale, the

Programmes included in the Effectiveness Initiative

Madrasa Resource Centre (MRC) Kenya
The Madrasa Project was created to provide a preschool experience for young children (ages three to six years) to help prepare them for school and provide basic Koranic teaching. The programme has been expanded to Zanzibar and Uganda. The MRC, based in Mombasa, Kenya, provides training and support to the country offices.

Associação da Criança Família e Desenvolvimento (CFD) Mozambique
Since 1995, the CFD (the Association for the Child, Family and Development) has focused on a variety of community-based activities, which include enabling 500 community network groups to systematise spontaneous ECD activities.

Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) India
Since 1972 SEWA has been committed to the empowerment of women, and the creation of autonomous unions for women who work in the informal sector. Since 1989 SEWA has been organising and operating crèches (for children from birth to three years of age) for women working in the tobacco industry in the rural Kheda district and, more recently, in urban settings.

Association for the Advancement of the Ethiopian Family and Child (ALMAYA) Israel
ALMAYA originated in 1985 as the Community and Educational Project for Beta-Israel, an ancient Jewish community in Ethiopia, which immigrated to Israel. The project trains workers from the Ethiopian community, develops educational materials to enhance the community's Ethiopian heritage, and educates others about the Beta-Israel community's Ethiopian origins and current life in Israel.

Community-based Family Education (Mt Pinatubo) Philippines
This programme was initiated with communities affected by the eruption of Mt Pinatubo. Based on an assessment of local culture, programmes were developed with the community and include early childhood activities, parent education, and micro-enterprise projects. Income from the latter is shared equally by families, the cooperative and the programme.

Proyecto de Mejoramiento Educativo, de Salud y del Ambiente (PROMESA) Colombia
This integrated community-based early childhood programme was designed initially as an alternative participatory approach to ECD that could serve as a basis for a model of integrated social development and as a research and development project. Having begun in 1978 with 100 families in four small farming and fishing villages on the pacific coast of Colombia, the programme now serves approximately 7,000 families along the coast and in the interior, and variations of the approach are being implemented elsewhere in Colombia and in other countries.

Programa No-formal de Educación Inicial (PRONOEI) Peru
This began as a nutrition programme in the 1970s, and evolved into a community-based preschool. Later it became a model for non-formal preschool and was adopted by the Ministry of Education for national dissemination.

Samenspel (Playing together/Joint action) Netherlands
Samenspel was established in 1989 as a small-scale project to test strategies for reaching immigrant families (primarily from Morocco and Turkey) and to explore ways to encourage mothers with young children to participate in play afternoons. Training programmes for teams of multi-ethnic play leaders gradually developed. Samenspel groups can be found at playgroup and community centres and within self-help organisations and immigrant organisations.

Águeda Movement – Bela Vista Portugal
The Águeda Movement began with the creation of the Bela Vista preschool, and is a conscious effort to provide for children who are socially marginalised. Outreach efforts to raise awareness led to more inclusive community-based actions, and activities to reduce duplication among Portugal's various social services, and increase access for children and families that are not being served.

Madres Guías (Guide Mothers) Honduras
This home and centre-based preschool programme is designed to help children make the transition easily from home to preschool and then to primary school. Madres Guías are local women trained to work with families in their homes and with the children as they enter preschool. There is also a radio programme associated with the effort that focuses on providing child development messages to the wider public.

men argue over who is right – and in some versions even come to blows over it. The moral is that we often argue out of ignorance, and believe our version of the truth to be the whole truth.

However, it is time for a modern re-telling of the tale. In this version, the men stop arguing once they realise that they have all had very different, but valid, experiences of the elephant. They devise a plan for trying to create a composite of their experiences and, at the same time, they call upon other villagers (perhaps those with the gift of sight) to add their perceptions of the elephant to the discussion. They call upon the elephant handlers, trainers, breeders, and scientists to all come and give their input. Then, despite their inability to see a whole elephant, they are able to arrive at a pretty good composite understanding of the elephant, complete with insights into its habits, behaviours, and what it is like to live and work with the elephant. They are now also able to understand how their intimate encounters with the elephant fit within and contribute to the larger understandings of the beast.

Two and a half years into the Effectiveness Initiative we are seeing the teams of insider-outsider researchers deriving extensive data, and their findings, insights and lessons are flying fast and furious. Reading many of the other articles in this edition will give a sense of what has been achieved so far. Our current challenge as facilitators of this far-reaching activity is to help participants in each of the programmes that are involved in the EI to engage in a collective construction of their understanding of the 'elephant'. To facilitate this collaboration between the 10 programmes, we have needed to develop tools for recording, sorting and representing the diverse learning that is happening, to characterise not only findings but also process.

To create what will be an ongoing dialogue, the Foundation's Coordinating Team has sponsored two week-long workshops to bring various sub-groups of the EI investigative teams together for intensive sharing of findings and collaboration. At each meeting, our understanding of what this matrix of activities can do for us (as participants, and as researchers into effective ECD) has deepened. Each workshop has taken

us deeper into the specific details and understandings emerging from each site, and because of that, our collective understanding is increasingly derived from, and based on, the data.

Using the notes from the meetings, summary reports written about the meetings, and the programme-specific reports circulated, a team challenged with the task of organising the cross-site analysis met to pull together the collective insights shared within the two meetings into a composite discussion. This gives us a larger, shared map of what makes programmes effective in various contexts. A similar composite of insights has also begun to emerge, showing how the EI process has served to build capacity for greater understanding within programmes and in some cases has spurred more effective action.

One software tool that can be used in this work is Atlas-ti, an application that allows the user to identify key themes within the text, identify quotations in which these themes appear, link the themes into families, and map them graphically. The software allows the coding of data by staying true to the

language and context of the original, and then the pulling out of both the themes and accompanying quotations within any number of groupings.

The following themes emerged from the first two workshops that attempted to make cross-site comparisons.

Informal spaces for reflection.
The team from Portugal used this phrase to highlight the importance of creating time and opportunities for people involved in a project to engage in self-evaluation and self-criticism, and to deepen their understanding of what they are doing. The simple fact of having 'extra' funds earmarked for reflection, not tied to service delivery and child-family outcomes, allows projects time to take stock of what they are doing and how this relates to the goals of the programme and the realities of the diverse stakeholders in the process. There was broad agreement, based on data from various sites, that to provide 'space'– both literally in terms of places where people can meet informally, and figuratively, in terms of time, permission, and funding – is a crucial element in

Honduras: *the 'Fishing' tool in operation*
photo: Luís Méndez, CCF Honduras

allowing the people at all levels of the project (from beneficiaries to staff to community members and visitors) to assimilate what the project has to offer, and to contribute to it.

A shared value across the sites is starting with what people know and perceive. This is not surprising, since it was a value embedded within the conception of the EI and probably served as a selective factor in negotiating with projects that wished to participate in the EI. Several sites addressed the question of how to engage in open-ended investigations that would allow them to investigate diverse perspectives and experiences. At the Israeli project, for example, interviewers used one major question: 'tell us about Almaya…' This allowed them to hear how various interviewees thought about the programme, and to derive the issues and concerns from the participants themselves.

The tools for gathering information in most sites focus on pulling together a composite portrait of the programme. As one participant pointed out, a portrait is more than just a likeness showing the lines of the face – when done well, it captures the essence of the person being drawn. Different portraits of the same person, or in this case of the same programme, will provide very different interpretations and details. To create these portraits, sites used a variety of tools, including project timelines, participatory learning type maps and charts, interviews, photos and visual documentation, and so on. (these methods are being gathered and detailed in an EI toolkit).

Better lenses and honesty.
The EI process is challenging participants to take their investigation deeper, and to find better lenses for viewing their work. Some of the teams began their investigations with plans to interview diverse stakeholders on their opinions of effectiveness. They have been challenged by the EI collective discussions to look at whether such interviews can provide a full perspective. Asking informants why a programme was effective (with no real certainty that it *was* effective for the person being asked) does not get to an understanding of how the programme worked, what worked, when, under which circumstances and constraints, and with what kinds of outcomes.

In each site EI participants have wrestled with the balance between honesty and political sensitivity. If a programme went off track because a donor demanded certain practices, how can the insiders on the team risk telling that story honestly? We have seen that all of the programmes deal with socially marginalised populations, and that, in fact, political considerations affected many of the decisions, actions, and sometimes failures. Yet in ongoing programmes, naming and identifying these barriers can be threatening to the continuation of the programme or the cooperation of necessary agencies. One 'finding' we have agreed upon is that it takes courage to engage in this type of evaluation, and that we need to devise ways to articulate the challenges, mistakes, and problems that do not endanger that programme.

Several of the team members have noticed that there are clear filters on the stories being told and information being reconstructed. Some filters are important to respect and maintain, such as protecting the privacy of individuals, and the confidentiality that is part of any social service activity. But other filters related to the power of leaders

who wanted to control the image of a programme, or donors who wished to impose certain goals or meaning on the programmes' activities, or staff who just revised history to fit their own purposes. The use of a combination of insiders and outsiders helped the teams to recognise filters with greater clarity and devise creative ways of working with them. Two common kinds of filters appeared to be the rose-coloured glasses (this programme was wonderful, perfect, problem free), and the use of sacred cow concepts, such as 'participation' or 'it started with the people' to describe situations that in fact were not really participatory or in fact started only with two people who were unusual within the community.

One of the benefits of sharing data across the sites is that it helps us gain clarity on what we see and what we miss. The process of presenting findings in terms of the data has turned out to be important. Several of the progress reports contained observations and conclusions that gave rise to questions and discussions among the group, along with a recognition by the presenting team that they needed to now take their investigation or analysis deeper.

Colombia: *AWG meeting in Cartagena*
photo: Teresa Moreno, Bernard van Leer Foundation

There was general agreement among the teams that problems and mistakes can be points where a lot of learning can take place. However, the willingness to admit to, examine and learn from mistakes or problems appears to relate to the role of individuals in power positions within the programme. If a programme director or donor or board does not appreciate the learning that can come from mistakes, then it is too dangerous for staff members or the leadership to acknowledge problems.

One challenge of the EI process is to find ways to remove the value judgement about problems, so that we can gain deeper insight into when and how difficulties actually spur participants' to solve problems, and when they instead damage morale or block programme functioning.

The discussions of problems and mistakes that worked led to the reminder that the EI is not about identifying best practices, but rather about gaining understanding about how any practice must be suited to the context, and done in ways that allow it to be effective. We are seeing repeatedly that what appears to have been significant in a history is not so much the creative format or design of a programme, but the people at the centre of that programme and *how* they do what they do. Mistakes are sometimes made by good people trying their best, in circumstances where one's best is not really supported adequately.

This relates directly to the question of honesty – programme providers and communities are working in rough and daunting circumstances, and there was evidence throughout the sites that donors and political leaders had made choices and decisions about those programmes without clear understanding – and honest recognition – of the situations.

One's own language.
The following is taken from the Progress Report from the Pinatubo Project in the Philippines:

> …after the workshop held at the Hague in October, a decision was made by the Philippine team, that the team members and the Pinatubo staff would use Filipino in all written work related to EI activities.

After two workshops with some parents and the EI team, and several consultations with the Pinatubo staff about the EI activities, the team leader noted how much more comfortable they were sharing details both verbally and in writing and how much more accurately the information was being documented when everything was in Filipino. The team leader felt that the data gathering and analysis that could be done would naturally be more precise, richer and in greater depth if they were encouraged to use Filipino. On the part of the two researchers (members) of the EI team assigned to work full-time on EI activities within the Pinatubo programme as well as the Pinatubo staff who were all involved in the activities, there was a feeling of being liberated from the anxiety of working in both Filipino and English. So the work of translating all the material – including documentation of workshops – would then be assumed mainly by the team leader and the Pinatubo Project Coordinator, also a member of the EI team.

The decision to use one's own language in conducting the research (chosen by many but not all of the teams), rather than using the language of the project funder has turned out to be significant in allowing teams to get at issues that are important to the programme participants and staff. In some cases, such as the Philippine example cited, this decision freed the EI team to work more effectively, although they must still work not only in Filipino and English, but also with the languages of the programme participants, the Aeta.

The concept of using one's own language was broadened through the cross-site discussions to a commitment to trying to stay true to the language of the experiences we are investigating. That means using the names that come from the data to assign 'theme codes' within Atlas-ti, and writing down the words people use when taking notes in meetings, rather than summarising what was said, or reducing it to jargon. If someone talked about the programme carrying on, we made a conscious effort not to translate that into 'sustainability'. Because of that, the maps of themes that are emerging contain many synonyms, each giving another shade of meaning to the ideas being expressed.

In addition, a conscious effort evolved to unpack concepts – to try to define the terms and the language in talking about the specific data, circumstances, or context which gave rise to them. We have seen that our goal of understanding what goes on in a programme is related to our ability to stay true to the experience, words, and details, and then to distil the meaning from those, rather than paraphrasing early in the process, and then finding ourselves stuck in the same, often over-generalised, vocabulary that characterises much of the discourse in ECD circles.

Living documentation.
Within the EI we have experimented with various methods of recording conversations, so that the resulting notes could both capture and facilitate better discussion. Among these is the use of 'web' creation, where a concept or term is discussed and expanded upon, and notes are kept in a spider-web style chain of associations connected to that. To deepen this style of note taking, additional lists of 'related questions', 'comments and observations', and other relevant data are kept, so that participants can help to sort, categorise and relate their thoughts to what other people have said, and so that the discussion can be reconstituted later in narrative form.

The Israeli team contributed a description of the Talmudic format (discussed in an earlier edition of *Early Childhood Matters**) that allows for a central text to be presented together

with commentary and linkages to other scripture. Based on that model, we are experimenting with writing up the cross-site analysis into a form we are calling a 'living document', which will include a graphic image of the map of relevant themes, a brief definition or summary of the topic, a narrative text discussing the theme together with quotations and examples derived from the data, a section with questions that arise from this discussion, a section discussing implications for funders, a section for bibliographic links to relative research literature, and a column running down the right side of each section where readers can write comments, pose questions, challenge assertions, and contribute relevant data or findings from their programme.

The living documents will be written based on collective maps of themes, derived from the data. An initial mapping of data has yielded an emerging picture of a very large topic that was identified at the Cartagena cross-site meeting: 'acompañiento' (see page 53). This map, created out of the documentation from previous cross-site meetings, was presented to participants in the cross-site dialogue so that it could

be challenged, revised, and serve as a model for a variety of collective mapping exercises. From this work, an agreed upon map of themes will be used as the basis for writing up initial living documents, and for voluntary contributions of data from each site to 'fill in' the map with specifics from their work. This will allow each team to determine which of their data can be safely shared in the larger arena, and which needs to be kept confidential, 'translated' into more anonymous forms, or focussed for in-site or local audiences. We are also hoping that this process will spur teams to examine their data more deeply with some shared lenses, to give us greater insight into issues of common concern.

Taking back, giving back.
The example of challenging the maps with the participants, given above, reflects a process which teams have used within their own investigations. It has emerged as an important part of the EI process – taking back what we find to the people who generated the information, both to make sure we have understood what the contributors of the information meant, and to deepen that understanding by stimulating further

dialogue. In addition, taking information back creates a springboard for giving back to participants, not only by providing information on the other parts of the elephant, but also by creating the space for group and individual reflection.

Part of giving back is making sure that a good proportion of the research effort is focussed on topics of concern to the programme staff and participants, not just to the funders or ECD field at large.

Within the work of individual teams at the programme sites, and within the cross-site workshops, we have tried to find active and participatory ways of taking back, sharing, and deepening the information (getting beyond dry presentation and lectures).

EI as capacity building, activating processes.
Three of the teams (Philippines, India, Portugal) chose to see the EI primarily as a capacity-building activity, rather than as research. They integrated EI activities into their ongoing programme operation, seeing the Initiative as an opportunity for deepening reflection and self-evaluation among programme

stakeholders. As we learn more about how these tools can help programmes evolve, and how others have used their EI tools for activating effective reflection and capacity-building, we are learning how to use EI tools and insights to stimulate new and more effective ways of working to support young children, their families and communities.

What next?

In discussing how the processes of the EI are revealing factors that can be significant in influencing project effectiveness, and listing and discussing a number of these factors, this article leads on to the question 'How can all this mass of qualitative data be organised and worked with so that lessons can be drawn to guide future work in the ECD field? One approach to this complex task is discussed in the article that begins on page 53.   ❍

The Effectiveness Initiative in Mozambique

Laura Pujol

The Effectiveness Initiative (EI) in Mozambique aims to reinforce community-based early childhood development (ECD) programmes in Mozambique through the results of an in-depth and process-oriented exploration. This exploration is centred on four community-based ECD initiatives. Its emphasis is on the views of the community members and – especially – those of the children. In working with community members, the most significant topics are how they manage and sustain escolinhas (community ECD sites); what makes the communities so resilient; and how outside organisations can effectively support communities in providing quality ECD programmes. In working with the children, the main focus is on the importance to them of their escolinhas.

The Mozambique EI team have brought together staff from the Associação da Criança, Família e Desenvolvimento and Wona Sanana (To see children) to work with the four communities, helping them to gather information,

analyse it and draw conclusions on what works and what doesn't in their community-based ECD initiatives, and on how they see these developing over time. The selected sites are Hulene, a peri-urban area in the outskirts of Maputo (the site of the main case study); and Masivila in Gaza, Itokhula in Nampula, and Palmera in Maputo (in each of which there will be a case study focussed on a theme that characterises that site).

The team has reviewed and adapted the EI Analytical Framework by discussing what it means for them and localising the concepts on which it is based. As a result, they have come up with a tool that allows them to introduce themes at field level and to start gathering data. It is called the machamba – farm or garden in the Shangani language – and it works by using the machamba as an analogy for an escolinha.

Using the machamba analogy

The machamba analogy enables the exploration of all the concepts from

the Analytical Framework that are relevant for the machambas, plus some new ones. It replaces the logic of the Analytical Framework with the logic of the machamba, a logic that makes sense to the community and its context. When people discuss the escolinhas, they do so in terms of what makes the machamba work, then come up with their equivalents in the escolinhas. The process progresses through four levels.

First, the set of elements that are needed to make a machamba work are identified. This is the level of 'What we have'. This means more than just what is the soil like, what tools and experience do we have, how would it support a particular crop. It extends to such factors as what happens without human intervention, and what is growing there already .

The second level is 'What this represents' – here the machamba relates to the escolinha: for example, perhaps the fertiliser represents the animadora; the growing seed the child.

The third level goes deeper, drawing out 'What this signifies' – this may signify the value of the animadora: her attitudes, skills, experience and so on.

Finally, the fourth level is about 'What this makes possible' – the potential that is there for children to grow within their communities, for example.

The method is still being refined by the Mozambique EI team internally and through tests conducted in two of the four selected sites. But it is already clear that there is sufficient space and scope in the analogy of the machamba to incorporate different perspectives; and that it strengthens the community's ownership and vision of the escolinha as it is discussed and challenged.

There are different ways of using the analogy. Some people see children fit in the machamba as seeds, some as land and some as the harvest. They explain:

When you start the machamba, you don't start from scratch, you don't remove everything from the land because that is foolish.

The children are seen in their context, interacting with what is already there for them. There are elements that feed into the process, and there may be secondary elements that are also fundamental to the strength of the whole process. For example, grass burning prepares the land:

If you don't get the land ready it turns into a negative element, yet if you get it ready it turns into an important strength.

What is the equivalent element in an escolinha? It would be difficult to introduce this in an abstract way, but easy to establish a comparison between the preparation of the soil and the mobilisation of parents to take children to escolinhas.

The machamba, just as the escolinha, is not only seen as what it is and what it represents, it is also seen in terms of what it will produce: the quality of the crop or the qualities of the children who will one day be adults, playing a range of roles in their communities.

What are the results of the escolinha? What is being nurtured and grown in the escolinha that will be harvested and go back into the granary? Children who go to the escolinha benefit – for example, they become more clever and knowledgeable. When they take their place in their community as they grow and mature, they add new richness to what is there as they interact with parents and siblings, generating more knowledge among them. Discussions by community members take the analogy further, exploring the meaning of the child as an active participant in its environment.

The machamba is also a way to bring in traditional knowledge that already exists in the community, recognising its value and linking it to the escolinha. One example is that of discussing the control of pests in the machamba: people grow medicinal plants in their machambas, which are also used to treat children's illnesses.

The challenges faced by the team now are how to systematise the variety of elements identified through using the machamba analogy and the communities' reflections about how they have related these to children and the escolinhas. These are complex issues, yet the machamba is easier to work with than working directly with abstract concepts.

The use of the machamba analogy automatically ensures that the discussion is contextualised in a particular and specific way. The opinions of each person relate to the wider context that is established by everyone who contributes: everybody understands the relationship between what is being said and the escolinha. This has solved an important question for the team in relation to the EI: how to anchor the EI discussions in a permanent framework, in ways that make sense to the reality of the people they work with. The machamba analogy is highly effective in this respect. ○

This article draws on the Action Plan of the Mozambique EI Team *and personal communications with the members of the team.*

Mozambique: *children at an escolinha*
photo: Leonardo Yánez, Bernard van Leer Foundation

Honduras: the Madres Guías of La Huerta

Liliana Godoy R

The author joined the Christian Children's Fund Honduras (CCFH) Effectiveness Initiative (EI) team, in the study of the Madres Guías (Guide Mothers) project in the community of La Huerta, Honduras. She is one of the outsiders in the team, whose principle job is to help make visible important aspects of what is happening that insiders may not see and take into account because they are too close to the work. This article presents the author's views on some of the project's achievements.

'… and you, why do you want a boat, if I may ask?' asked the king …
'To seek the unknown island' replied the man.
'What unknown island?' asked the king, hiding his smile as though confronted with a kind of madman with a mania for voyages – the type that, right from the very start, you know you should not thwart.
'The unknown island' repeated the man.
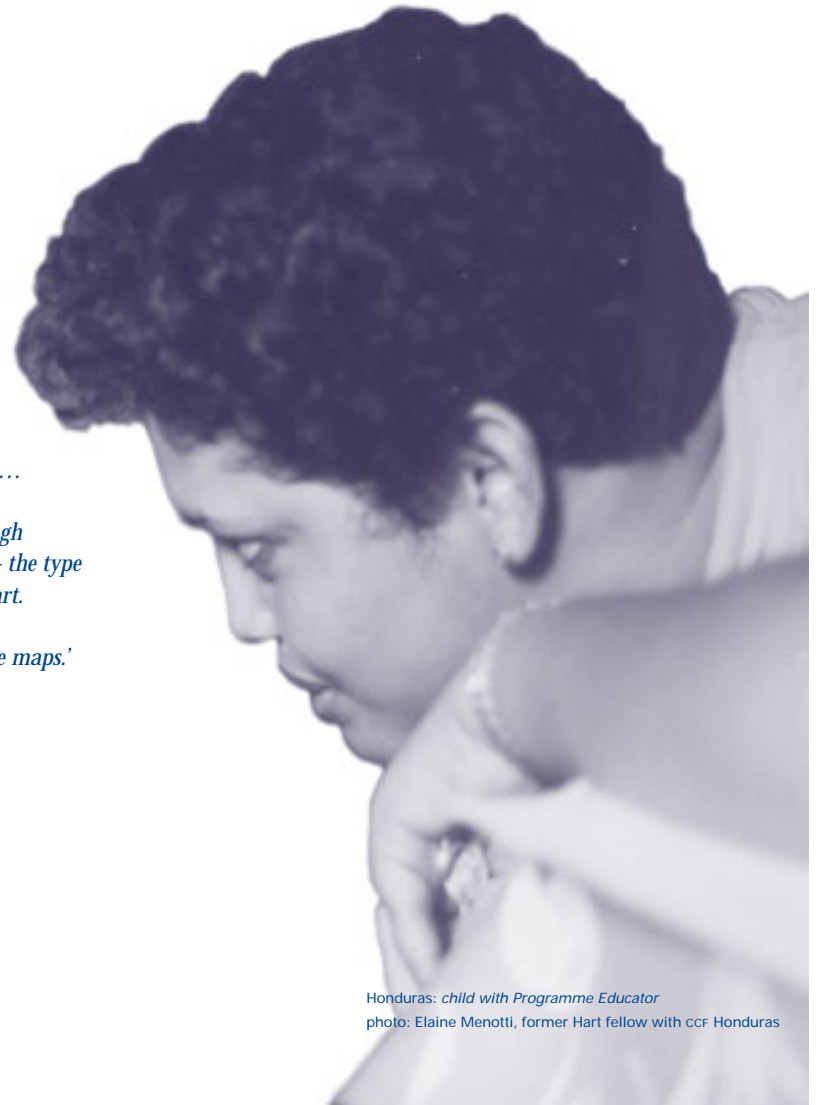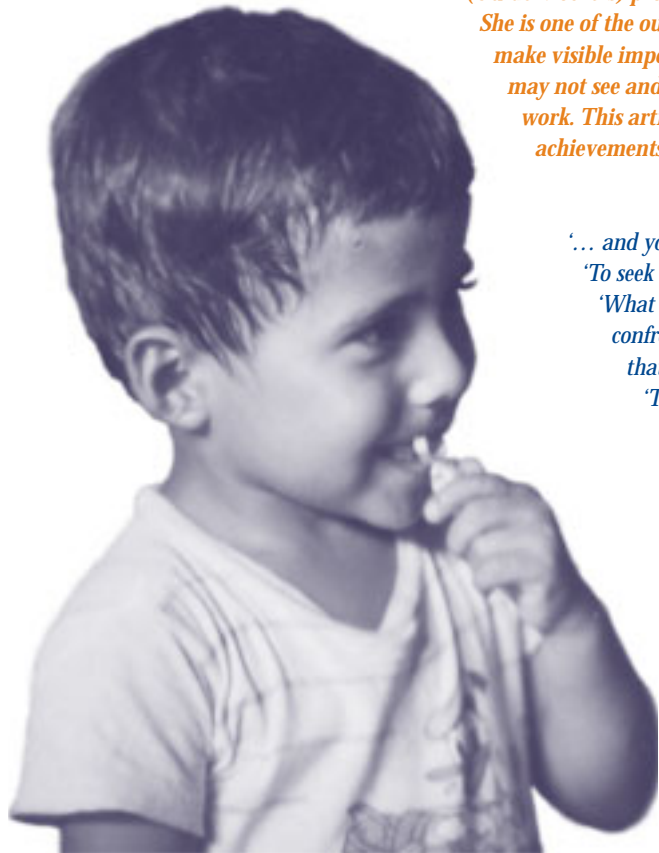'But there are no unknown islands! They are all are on the maps.'
'Only the known islands are on the maps'
'And what unknown island are you speaking of?'
'If I could tell you that, it would not be unknown.'

The story of the unknown island
José Saramago

Honduras: *child with Programme Educator*
photo: Elaine Menotti, former Hart fellow with CCF Honduras

> *this has not excluded the use of*
> *an ad hoc analytical framework*

The EI process in Honduras and its phases

So how has it gone, this search for unknown elements, or success factors or possible keys to effectiveness that have perhaps been intuited, but that have been invisible or undocumented until now? It has been useful to have a general analytical framework for the Effectiveness Initiative (EI). But more useful is the fact that this has not excluded the use of an *ad hoc* analytical framework in Honduras. This has guided the search for local experiences – something that has made it possible to take account of local realities and specifics. One resource that has helped to orientate both the search and the interpretation of its findings has been

the formulation of what we called the 'wild hypothesis', the conjectures and suspicions that the first analyses of some data awoke in us. It has functioned as a kind of pattern or first map to help us achieve a more rigorous confirmation of our findings.

Essentially, the investigative process has organised itself around establishing relationships between:

- the objectives of the study;
- the instruments used in the study;
- the findings;
- the formulation of hypotheses;
- the confirmation of gaps in information; and
- feedback for the next steps in the search.

In order to establish these relationships the following list of questions was developed to guide the process of gathering, recording, processing and analysing the information.
- Why are we investigating what we are investigating?
- What do we want to investigate?
- What are the instruments we should use, and how should we use them?
- How do we organise the data we obtain?
- How do we analyse these data?
- How do we return the results of our search to the sources so that they can be validated?
- How do we systematise the results of the validation?
- Which are the important findings to share with others and why?

- How and to whom should we disseminate these important findings?

We see these as links and we understand their relevance by chaining them together logically. This is because it is the connections between them, combined with constant feedback to each level of the project, that produce a continuous process that results in the generation and recording of lessons.

The tools that we used

In the study, we used a 'tool kit' for each of its different phases; and we involved different people in each phase as well. The following tables (page 18) make this clear.

Phase: mapping the information

Tool	Activity	Participants
The river	Charting the story of the project	- Project EI Team
Roses and thorns	Constructing a living image of the Madres Guías	- Madres Guías
The mural	Presenting images of the community	- Children
Fishing	Generating images of the Madres Guías	- Madres Guías
	The Madres Guías' concepts	- Madres Guías
	Listening to our children	- School children
	Listening to parents	- Parents
Looking at images	Children expressing their opinions	- Preschool children
Structured and semi-structured interviews	Interviews	- Active Madres Guías - Inactive Madres Guías - Former and present members of the Parents' Committee - Project personnel - External consultants
Card games	Exploring the importance of tasks	- Madres Guías
Survey	Seeking opinions	- Mothers
The album	Making a qualitative profile of the guiding mother	- Madres Guías

Phase: returning and validating the information

Tool	Participants
Group discussions aided by graphics about the results produced through the activities	- Madres Guías and mothers - School children - Parents

Phase: organisation and analysis of data

Tool	Objective
Transcribing	To recover the data
Matrix	To systematise the data and tools
Anthropological perspective	To obtain a new vision of the data
Categorising according to thematic areas	To enable a deeper analysis of the data
Glossary	To establish common meanings

The findings: in search of the lost island

The 'wild hypothesis' that I described earlier was a useful stage in helping us to understand what we were discovering. Also important was the development of common meanings between all of those involved, insiders or outsiders. But central to our investigation has been the formulation of two plans for analysing the data. The first of these is about the Madres Guías project itself, and the second covers the processes of the CCFH team, both in documenting this work and in its

Plan for analysing data	Findings	Lessons learned
The Madres Guías project: identification of the keys to effectiveness	By areas (identified categories) By actors involved From qualitative and quantitative results of processes	
The EI research in the Madres Guías project: the process and its impact on the Madres Guías project and organisation	By phases By actors involved By method used By effects produced on the project, on the organisation, on the actors	

participation in the EI. The table above shows the basic structure of these two plans, relating their intent to the kinds of findings that were sought, and the ways in which they were sought.

Questionings, first findings and lessons

The remainder of this article deals with the themes/topics that have arisen in the EI work within the project so far. Much of the content comes from the discussions of the CCFH EI team, but some is from me alone. It is all about hypothesis, findings or questions. Everything is still open and will be modified in the future as our analyses become more profound.

Empowerment and self-esteem
The Madres Guías value the knowledge they have acquired, the roles they have developed, and the recognition they have received from the community over the years that the project has been operating. All of this strengthens their self-esteem as people, their sense of value in their families, and their sense of worth as contributors to positive changes in their community. In addition, the manuals they received from the project are perceived and used as 'the books of truth' and heighten both the status and the trust that the Madres Guías enjoy from the other mothers.

The Madres Guías project has a system of prizes as a way of validating and recognising the Madres Guías' efforts. Such non-monetary incentives serve to reinforce the act of volunteering. In this sense, the project has become a space in which the talents of the community are being rediscovered and brought back into use.

The act of returning the information produced by the investigation to the Madres Guías has had a great impact on their motivation: it makes them feel more appreciated and valued. In addition, this act of returning becomes part of sharing the investigative experience. In fact, the Madres Guías are so interested in the information that some of them asked for copies of the folders containing the results of the techniques (fishing, for example) so they could keep them to study in their own homes.

Participation
The Madres Guías project establishes functions for each of the actors involved, and makes a point of clearly communicating the 'rules of the game'. This contributes to the community being better disposed towards the project and to a greater degree of participation by all members of the

community. One example that supports this view is that the community elects the Madres Guías to serve as such, and also elects them to serve on the Parents' Committees. Hypothetically at least, we feel that these are affirmations of the effectiveness of the ways in which the project promotes cooperation.

Community monitoring
We have also been interested in community monitoring and models of management that are based on the interchanges of lessons learned between the community and organisations such as CCFH. To explore this, we asked questions such as, 'Is there any relation between the quality of service that the project supplies, and the role of community participation in monitoring early childhood care and development projects?'

Leadership/Culture of respect for hierarchies
The members of the CCFH team saw a tendency to respect hierarchies in the various actors in the community that is characteristic of the national culture. In the socio-linguistic context of the region, there is a leaning towards subordination that can be seen in terms such as 'teacher', 'president' and
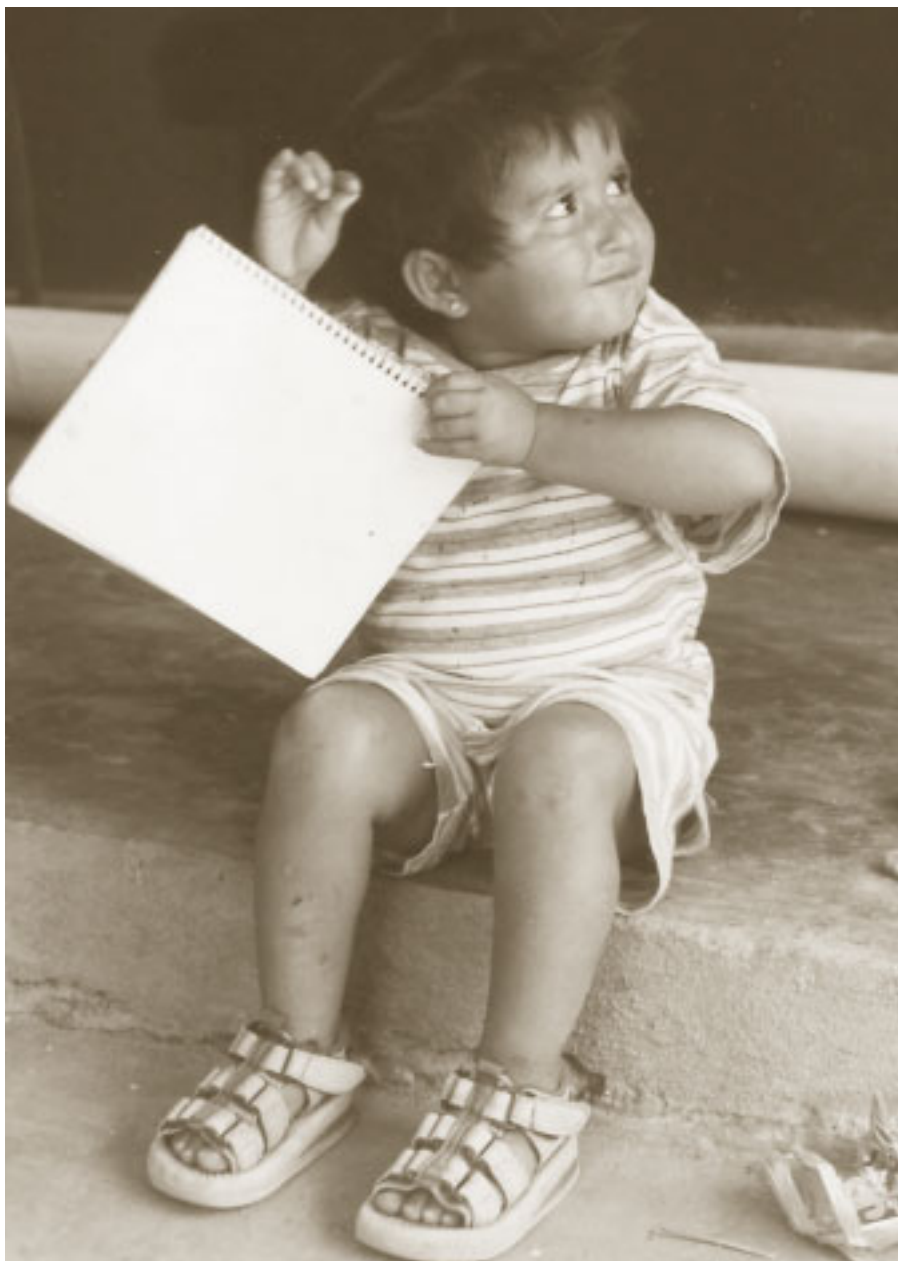
Honduras: *Paola of the La Huerta community*
photo: Elaine Menotti, former Hart fellow with CCF Honduras

'director'. In substituting these by terms such as 'kindergarten worker' or 'coordinator of the Parents Committee', the project attempted to reduce the sense of hierarchy in favour of something more horizontal and therefore more appropriate to cooperation.

The project is introducing changes in some of the community's cultural patterns. For example, a more active participation by women. In this sense, the mediating role of CCFH is an important resource because it promotes participation generally, and also brings in the idea of negotiation as a real process for decision-making.

In the case of the Madres Guías, their skills give them status with the mothers because they increase their credibility. At the same time, the fact that they have the 'seal of approval' from CCFH, is something significant that strengthens general confidence in the implementation of the programme.

Leadership and power
A variety of reflections emerged about the types of leadership within the project, especially in the case of the Madres Guías and the Parents' Committee. In this sense, it seems that the community's idea of who has real power – and therefore real leadership – is linked to who has control of resources. At the same time, the leadership – and therefore the power – that the Madres Guías have in the community is different in nature: it comes from their control of information. Hypothetically, the project links two types of power (or leadership): economic power, via the Parents' Committee; and the power inherent in the control of information by the Madres Guías. However, although the project has had an influence by positively encouraging leadership, communities still link power with political parties; something that is, once again, a product of the socio-cultural characteristics of the region.

The profile of the Madres Guías
From the results we have obtained, we can see that the community respects the Madres Guías and recognises the worth of their work. The Madres Guías are seen as leaders, and have great power to mobilise the community. They also show more resilience than other women.

However, within the project we encountered young single women without children who were or had been Madres Guías. These were not accepted by the community, nor shown respect by the mothers. But the project has had to use them because there have not been enough mothers in the community willing to become Madres Guías.

We feel it is important to reflect more on this reality, or investigate it further. After all, many of these young women carry out the role of mothers for their smaller siblings. In addition, it is a feature of the project to ensure that all of the women who guide are properly trained to support mothers. One idea that remains a question is whether these young women could promote a new line of development in the project: that of reducing the incidence of pregnancy among young women, or of ensuring that they are better prepared to become mothers. It would also be useful to find out why there are insufficient mothers who are willing to become Madres Guías.

Training

Training is the crux of the project, the point at which all the other themes/topics that we have discussed interact with each other. A large quantity of printed materials supports the training and emphasises its importance to the project. These materials are updated periodically.

The Madres Guías use both technical and colloquial language appropriately. On the technical side, this could be the result of long and ongoing training in areas such as basic care of children.

In the case of Madres Guías who cannot read, or do so with difficulty, the drawings that are included in the training materials complement what they are able to read while their trainers reinforce what they learn with other materials.

Communication

The manuals that the Madres Guías use represent a resource through which the project communicates their functions and their competencies. They also contain programmed content for each of the thematic areas. However, it is important to recognise that the oral tradition predominates in the activities that the Madres Guías run with the mothers. In this respect, we could ask, 'What is the effect or influence of the oral tradition on the effectiveness of interventions, where the incidence of non-literacy or illiteracy is high?' and 'Given that the oral tradition is significant in transferring knowledge, does it influence the effectiveness or quality of the activities, and does it have any effect on the sustainability of the project?'

The symbolic

The 'symbolic' is about attributing strength and power to some activities and some figures who participate in the project. It is especially associated with the Madres Guías. For example, they are seen as models for the other mothers, for families and generally for other members of the community too. This is because of who each of them is and what they do in early childhood care and development. This is reinforced by ceremonies. For example, there is a ceremony at which each receives the manuals, bags and boxes of materials that legitimise their roles as Madres Guías, and another as the children enter the kindergarten and are received by the kindergarten workers. This latter ceremony reinforces a commitment between Madres Guías and kindergarten workers.

The significance of religious beliefs and practices also has to be considered. Do these impact positively on the dedication and commitment of the Madres Guías?

Constructing a story without end

These are the achievements of the project to date as they seem to me, an outsider. Now we have to return to the original data and analyse it afresh, fortified by the findings and lessons that we have learned from our analyses so far. And we should also think about extending the search for underlying effectiveness into communities other than La Huerta.

In terms of the EI, what is needed now is to share these findings and lessons. The objective is to identify differences and similarities as part of capitalising on our collective learning through the EI. In this way we shall discover new clues that will help us in our search for that unknown island. ○

Philippines:
early childhood care and development at the heart of community development

Feny de los Angeles-Bautista

Ten years ago, Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines erupted and 10,200 Aeta families were displaced from their ancestral homes at the foot of this long-dormant volcano. In the aftermath, and in the midst of relief efforts, the Community of Learners Foundation (COLF), a non governmental organisation (NGO) in the Philippines, started its early childhood focused Pinatubo Family Education Programme in two of the resettlement areas where Aeta families were just beginning the challenging process of rebuilding their lives. The programme was supported by Deutsche Welthungerhilfe (DWHH), a German development agency that wanted to incorporate programmes for children within the massive rehabilitation relief efforts that it was funding, and that were being carried out by the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM).

The eruption of Mt. Pinatubo on June 16, 1991 was a painful tragedy and a great challenge in our life. We left our farm and everything we owned. We did not want to leave our home because we do not want to live in the town. But the government forced us to leave and move to a place closer to the town. There was nothing we could do and after all, they were right. It's a good thing we listened to them or else we would have been buried in lava.
Devillena Family as told by Mercy, mother

At the outset, the Pinatubo programme was designed to provide a support system for a total of 1,072 Aeta families from the two resettlement sites in an integrated, community-based way, with a special focus on the early childhood years. COLF's approach involved working directly with children[1] and their parents; and the programme focused on the provision of basic services – health, nutrition and education – for both.

For the first year, COLF provided a programme team composed of nurses, teachers and social workers from its base in urban Metro Manila. They served as community-based child development workers responsible also for community organising and development. They were trained intensively at the COLF School for Children and other COLF community-based programmes in poor urban and rural communities. Early on, local

community members who had completed either secondary education or had a college degree in a related field, were recruited as volunteers/apprentices. This was in preparation for an eventual phase-out of Metro Manila-based staff in favour of a predominantly local staff. By the eighth year of the programme only two Metro Manila-based staff members remained: most of the other 24 are residents of the two communities.

Initially, the programme consisted of two components.

1. A morning centre-based programme for four to six year olds with an experiential, play-based curriculum and supplementary feeding and health services.
2. An afternoon, home-based parent-child programme of playgroups and a Parent Education Programme (PEP). The latter consisted of workshops, discussion groups on family life issues, early childhood care and development (ECCD), livelihood, and a literacy programme. Supplementary feeding, growth monitoring, and health services were also provided for infants up to three years olds.

From the second year onwards, the following components were added or developed.
- Home and centre-based Child-to-Child programmes for children aged 7 to 15, to support their continued schooling and promote their active participation in family health and education programmes. In the home-based programme, they formed a group facilitated by a COLF

child development worker, while younger children were attended to by parent volunteers.
- An expansion of PEP livelihood activities (coordinated by an agriculturist); and preparations for organising parent cooperatives. Both components involved all COLF community and child development workers.

To mobilise more support for the Pinatubo programme, the families and staff of the COLF School for Children also organised regular medical missions for each of the two programme sites. This both supplemented the health programme and built bridges between families in the school and families in the Pinatubo programme. For example, children in the school raised funds to buy learning materials and books they wanted to share with the Aeta children.

Over the past eight years, the programme has continued successfully, and there have been a number of significant developments. For example, PEP also serves as the context for community organising efforts, including agriculture-based and off-farm livelihood projects, a local people's

organisation for each resettlement site has been registered, and cooperatives are being organised. These developments resulted from incorporating a focus on issues such as gender, politics and economics, while small-scale initiatives such as the above were being simultaneously launched. But they also owed much to COLF's efforts around parental cooperation in running the children's programmes, and the livelihood projects and cooperatives. Such complementary developments show COLF's holistic and integrated approach to supporting the development of young children and their primary caregivers.

Weaving the Effectiveness Initiative (EI) into the Pinatubo programme

A programme such as this was clearly of interest to the EI because of its approaches and because of its holistic nature. The EI in turn was interesting for COLF because:
- it provided a valuable and rare opportunity to undertake an in-depth study on the programme and its impact on the lives of the children and families, and the two communities;

- it was a very important means of further strengthening the programme as the DWHH[2] funding was coming to a close;
- it would help to consolidate whatever progress or gains had been made; and
- it would facilitate the all-important process of 'handing the stick' over to the parents who would ultimately be responsible for sustaining the programme and its benefits.

However, COLF was convinced that the EI had to be woven seamlessly into the life of the programme: this would help to ensure that the primary stakeholders – children, parents, and community-based and COLF staff – would be actively involved in the *action-documentation-reflection-action* processes that are central to the EI.

For its part, the EI looks for both qualitative and quantitative information and emphasises the need for an in-depth analysis of the relationships between both kinds of data in the quest for a definition and description of so-called 'effectiveness in ECCD programmes'. As such, EI is primarily a cooperative teaching-learning process.

Uniting the needs of the Pinatubo programme and those of the EI proved to be natural and easy. This was because of the centrality of participatory learning and action (PLA) to the programme as a whole and to the PEP in particular. In working with parents from the beginning of the programme, a PLA-guided 'action-reflection process' was applied both as a way of learning about the parents, their children and families, and the community, and also as an approach to problem-solving and action planning. From the beginning, parents and COLF child development workers developed and used interactive group processes like games, reflective-problem-solving activities, group discussions, and writing processes adapted from the 'whole language approach' applied by COLF in its educational programmes.

In addition, the parents themselves have always been involved in the organisation of their learning activities and the pace at which this learning takes place. More importantly, they have always taken steps – small or giant – to address their realities. For example: they developed their own learning materials through the creation of books and posters, and through the

construction of maps, matrices, charts, calendars and diagrams that represent their life experiences as parents and community members; organised their knowledge; and promoted the detailed analysis of issues that affect them as caregivers of their families, as workers and as community members. Dialogue has always been central to all of these processes, and it was evident to us in COLF that – for the children, the parents and COLF staff members – the all-important stage that Paulo Freire has described as 'taking action in cooperative association with one another, both as facilitators and learners to free ourselves' could really flourish.

Given this setting, the initial stages of planning for the activities of the EI concentrated on choosing and adapting highly interactive methods and activities for the sets of processes (the 'EI tool kit') that would be used to learn with, from and about children, families and communities.

Two examples show how this worked in practice. Small group brainstormings with parents, older children and community-based staff were used during the development of the

curriculum 'web' that lies at the heart of the Pinatubo Family Education Programme. Translated into, and adapted for the EI context, this involved the participation of both the primary stakeholders and the COLF EI team members. The point was to generate a set of themes that had proved significant during the life of the programme so far that could be used as starting points for 'mapping its contours'. Two major themes emerged: 'Families caring for children' and 'Communities caring for children'. In the same brainstorming session, words, phrases, and visual images were generated for each theme. A further round of brainstorming sessions and discussions concentrated on framing questions out of these. Taken together, this set of questions constitute one way of articulating 'What is it that we want to learn through this study?' from the diverse points of view of all stakeholders.

Collecting and organising data ... and learning from it

But to succeed, EI work must not only identify, develop and use the right tool kit it must also discover, organise and learn from all the relevant information

or data. In the Pinatubo programme this was made easier by the quantity and quality of the documentation that had been undertaken from the beginning. Existing sources included narrative progress reports, financial reports, minutes of meetings, programme logbooks for various purposes, curriculum plans and staff journals for the parent education programme and the children's programme, and evaluation reports by independent evaluators which were commissioned by the DWHH. Using existing sources of information also involved collecting, organising and tabulating various children's records: the Developmental Assessment Checklists of specific groups of children and school records (those who participated in the programme from 1991-93 as 3 to 5 year olds and are now close to completing elementary school or are starting high school, and the children who are now 7 to 10 year olds and were up to three year olds when they participated in the programme from 1992-93); growth monitoring charts; health records; children's drawings and written work; and anecdotal records from staff journals. These sources of information provide
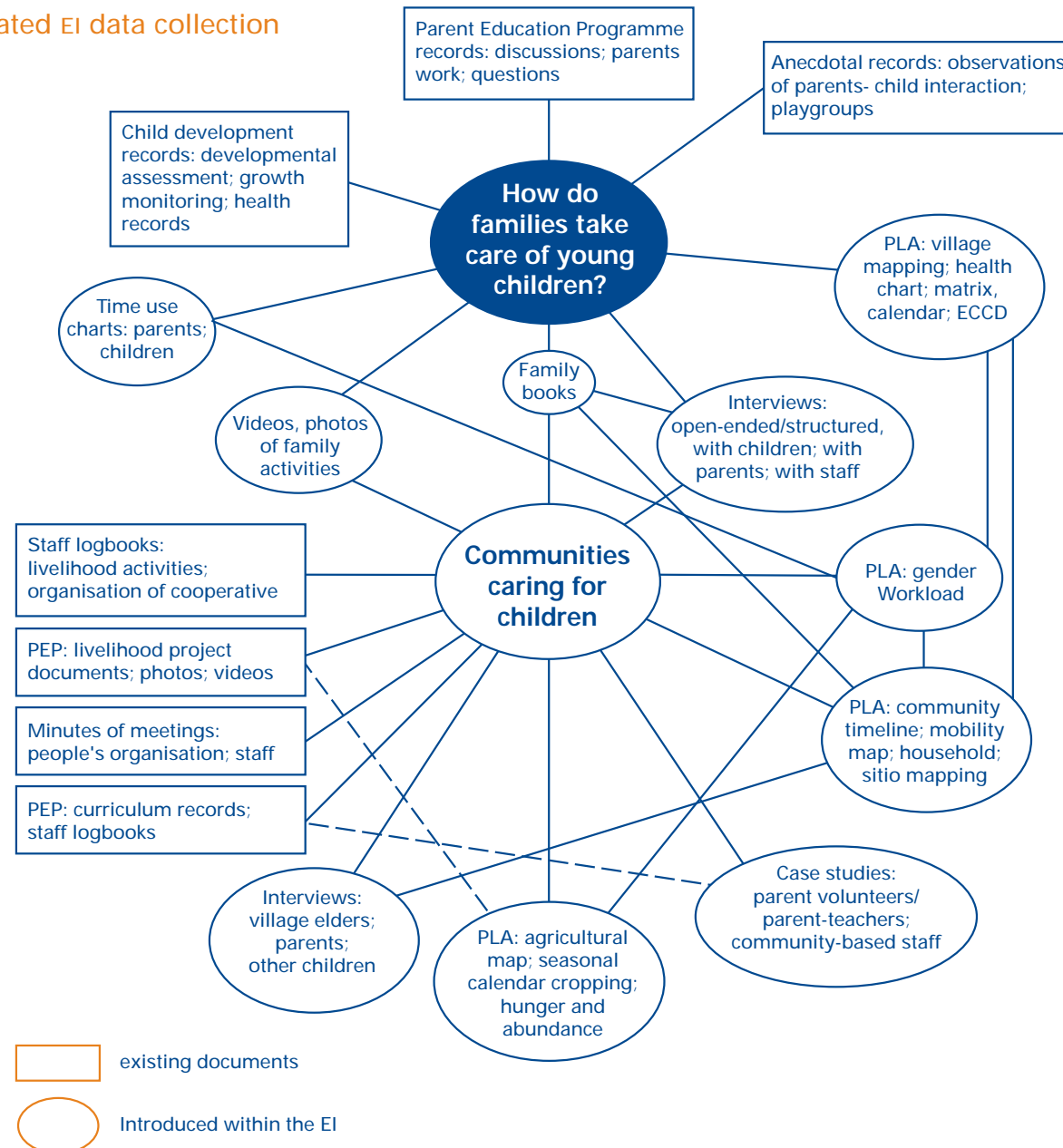
plan for triangulated EI data collection

details about programme activities and, in part, about programme impact on children, on families and on the community.

A consideration of this information led us to identify what was missing, and to identify and develop the right processes to gather in that data – to produce new tools for the tool kit.

To learn from all of this – data as well as processes – we developed a data triangulation plan (see example on this page). In using this, we were able to generate more questions that were pursued both for purposes of understanding 'effectiveness' and for planning the next steps in the 'action research' agenda that EI has allowed COLF to develop and pursue. More important, the process is now significantly informing and providing directions for the planning of the final phase and the preparation of a three-year project proposal for the two programme sites.

How it worked in practice

The following examples about learning to read and write, and about

Parent Education Programme records: discussions; parents work; questions

Anecdotal records: observations of parents- child interaction; playgroups

Child development records: developmental assessment; growth monitoring; health records

How do families take care of young children?

PLA: village mapping; health chart; matrix, calendar; ECCD

Time use charts: parents; children

Family books

Interviews: open-ended/structured, with children; with parents; with staff

Videos, photos of family activities

Communities caring for children

Staff logbooks: livelihood activities; organisation of cooperative

PLA: gender Workload

PEP: livelihood project documents; photos; videos

PLA: community timeline; mobility map; household; sitio mapping

Minutes of meetings: people's organisation; staff

PEP: curriculum records; staff logbooks

Case studies: parent volunteers/ parent-teachers; community-based staff

Interviews: village elders; parents; other children

PLA: agricultural map; seasonal calendar cropping; hunger and abundance

☐ existing documents

◯ Introduced within the EI

> *Learning to read and write cannot be done as something parallel or nearly parallel to the illiterates' reality. Hence, as we have said, the learning process demands an understanding of the deeper meaning of the word. More than writing and reading 'the wing is of the bird', illiterate learners must see the need for another learning process: that of 'writing' about one's life, 'reading' about one's reality. This is not feasible if learners fail to take history in hand and make it themselves – given that history can be made and remade.* (Paolo Freire)

ensuring health for all, give a sense of how weaving the EI into the Pinatubo programme worked in practice, and shows some of the unexpected outcomes that resulted from using particular processes.

The creation of family books shows how an EI tool was integrated into the parent education programme. By telling the story of each family and building a community-created and owned literacy resource, the goals of supporting parents as adult learners, and of documenting the experiences of families are both achieved. Another example is what we have learned from a series of health-related PLA activities. This work addressed a major problem that is critical to the young child's well-

being and provided some insights into programme impact on parents as caregivers. These activities were introduced within EI as a practical problem-solving process to strengthen both the parents and the programme itself.

Example 1: learning to read and to write their lives: stories of families as caregivers
The parents specifically asked for a literacy component within the programme from the outset. And, because the programme was early childhood care and development (ECCD) centred, it was natural to focus the literacy work on ECCD. In fact, ECCD provided both the conceptual and practical content of the work and the motivation for the parents to follow it

through. More than that, COLF saw this work and its ECCD focus as being a major force within the community's social development process because its function was essentially to bring about social change: to improve the quality of care for young children within the family and the community. In addition, the writing process in itself is analogous to a researchers' thinking processes and this is an excellent way of enabling the parents and the older children in the family to be actively involved as 'researchers' within EI.

COLF's approach to this work was greatly influenced and informed by the many years of exploring and applying the 'whole language approach' in teaching children how to read, write and use language to communicate in various ways. Combining the writers' workshop process and a literature-based reading programme with other more 'traditional' ways of teaching children how to read and write (for example, through the use of phonics, word recognition, decoding and analysis) has always been an exciting adventure for the children and teachers at COLF. This was of course also implemented with children in the Pinatubo programme.

But, for the first time, these principles and strategies were also used with adult learners who wanted to learn to read and write alongside their children. The principles were applied on the basis of the relaxed, informal storytelling and conversation about family activities that is also part of the Pinatubo programme. This produced many opportunities for parents to create their own books – for example, about traditional herbal cures, about their children's experiences, about their immediate environment, their community and history.

In practice, informal group dialogue, along with more intimate interpersonal interaction with individual parents, allowed them to identify and frame questions, identify problems, and analyse the enabling factors as well as the obstacles to the provision of 'good quality care' for their own children. This was integral to what Freire has called the process of *concientización* – by learning more about their own children and their families, the parents become more aware of and truly conscious about the social, cultural, economic and political realities that they confront daily, and go on to address their current and emerging

needs and interests. Overall, the PEP curriculum integrates all the key elements in this process of *concientización,* while the literacy component is a major element in making it real.

The writing process for the family books has a number of elements.

1. *Focusing.* Focusing on the family books actually started with the brainstorming on the EI theme 'Families caring for children' and was followed by brainstorming on stories about their own families. Parents then brainstormed on questions that would guide their writing process. These included: What are the things we want to share with others about our own family? Who are we? What do we do? What are our problems? How do we solve them? How do we take care of one another? This involved making lists: of questions, of people and their activities, of needs, problems and solutions.

2. *Gathering and Remembering.* Parents, staff and children gathered information from many sources, including time use charts which were introduced within the EI. For the writing of family books, they recorded their notes on their family's activities in notebooks, and in the process created a kind of 'living book' about their family experiences.

3. *Organising and analysing.* The group spent several sessions talking about their notes and how they would organise these into a story about their families – one that would make sense to themselves and to their readers who were other community members. They also spent time taking these ideas apart and talking about what they meant to their lives as a family. They then began to choose text which would be accompanied by drawings, and some took pictures of their families.

4. *Elaborating, integrating, summarising.* As they wrote the first drafts using their notes, they elaborated on their initial ideas, combined information, condensed it, selected what they considered important, and discarded what they did not consider as important. The decisions were entirely theirs. After the full story had been written

When my parents and big sister go up to the mountains, I am left behind to take care of Kassandra, my little sister. I feed her, I bathe her and we play with other children. When Rita arrives from the daycare, I feed her first while I carry Kassandra. Then we play with other kids.
Before I go to school, we take a bath in the river with other kids. We race with one another and have a lot of fun!
We can now eat two to three meals a day. When my parents can sell charcoal in town, we can even buy fish!
Every Thursday morning, my mother cooks food for the children in the COLF playgroup. We enjoy playing with the toys that Madam made. Madam helps my sister Rebecca with her homework.
When someone in my family gets sick, we get help from COLF, also to look for medicine. Once my father was very sick and could not walk. They helped us bring him to the doctor and he got well.
de la Cruz family, as told by Margie, daughter.

When I wake up in the morning, I heat water and sweep outside our home since my wife has just given birth and can't do these things. My wife, Gemma is still in bed with our baby while I prepare breakfast and feed Jamaica and Jan Elaine. When Gemma wakes up, she stays with the baby – talking to him and playing with him. She also breastfeeds him and all the while talks to him so he will learn fast.

I bathe my two daughters before they go to the centre. My wife joined the PEP and she has been a parent volunteer since 1998 until now. Except that she just gave birth. She also helps Nanay Imelda, another parent-teacher in whose home the children play and learn along with other parents.

When I come home from work or even when I'm just at home, I carry our children, especially our new baby boy, James. I talk to him and play with him.

Lagmay family, as told by Johnny, father.

My youngest child studies at the COLF centre every morning. I also study through the PEP and help also with the children in the playgroup. In joining the PEP, I learned many things especially about discipline and my children. I like attending workshops with COLF.

My children learn a lot, like writing their names, the shapes, numbers and letters. When my husband comes home from work he plays with our children. He, Jonas and James especially like to play with the ball.
….
At night before we sleep, we help the older children with their assignment and school projects so they can do well in school. Even if my husband is tired he manages to make time for our children.

Feria Family as told by Jane, mother.

down, staff helped with spelling of words and other minor 'editorial' jobs.

5. *Publishing.* The final stage involved 'publishing' the final draft by putting together the drawings and rewritten text in clear handwriting – usually their own.

As the writing process progressed, it became clear that both the processes and the products were yielding very interesting and significant insights about their experiences as families, about individual members and how they viewed their roles as family members, about how they cared for their children and each other, and about their relationship with the programme and with COLF. Some evidence also emerged about programme impact on their lives. These results demonstrate what processes such as those involved in producing family books can reveal. They also explain why family books are used as a tool and a source of information for the exploration of both Pinatubo's major EI themes: 'Families caring for children' and 'Communities caring for families'.

The thinking processes involved in the writing process as summarised above, in every way parallel important steps or stages in action research. The writing process itself was designed to be an activity that enabled people to participate actively in learning about their own families, analysing and reflecting on their experiences

using a 'medium' or activity with which they were already very comfortable.

Example 2: communities caring for children: health for all
Health-related issues have posed the greatest challenge for COLF from the start; parents found it difficult to address and to change the practices and living conditions that caused childhood illnesses or fuelled the vicious cycles of malnutrition and childhood diseases. Thus, in the early stages of planning, health was chosen as a focus of collective problem-solving. It was also chosen as one of the ways in which participation in the EI could have a direct impact on strengthening parents as individual caregivers, as well as members of the community.

Tools were adapted from materials on PLA and participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and planned within the structure of the parent education programme. A workshop on health was convened in which parents identified and plotted out the occurrence of illnesses affecting family members over a 12 month period. They then analysed the data to discover: which illnesses affected large numbers of children at particular times; why certain illnesses seemed to be rampant at certain times of the year; and which illnesses were serious and required intervention beyond care at home.

At a subsequent workshop, parents discussed causes of illnesses and also developed a Curative Chart from the health calendar that listed what measures could be taken to treat a particular illness. The chart included: the use of traditional remedies; the need for a primary health worker; the need for clinic or hospital-based interventions. They then classified these interventions and constructed a curative matrix. In the process they also discussed which interventions were effective or not, and which ones were more convenient or were less accessible to them and for what reasons. They also debated the harmful effects of certain interventions, the matter of timing and appropriateness of interventions, including when to seek help beyond home remedies and the traditional healer *(albulario)* or

village health worker, and discussed and listed the difficulties encountered with each of these.

Philippines: *incidence of sickness indicated on a bar graph matrix*
photo: Community of Learners Foundation, COLF / Mount Pinatubo Project

Philippines: *small group discussion on the severity and incidence of the 18 most common illnesses in the resettlement area*
photo: Community of Learners Foundation, COLF / Mount Pinatubo Project

The next stage involved local workshops to elaborate on the issues raised so far and what could be done about them.

As a result the 'Health Fence' was introduced. This helps to prevent health problems and protect the family members, especially children. These workshops yielded valuable and significant information, as shown by this excerpt from the notes of four COLF staff members about one workshop.

Some of the mothers were talking while waiting for the other parents to arrive. Adeling was telling Isabel and Apang that she had just been to the health centre before going to the workshop that afternoon.

Adeling: *There were many patients, most of them with diarrhoea, but the doctor was not there and the midwife said he was not coming. And the midwife couldn't do much nor give them anything. All I wanted was to ask for oral hydration tablets.*

Apang: *But since then, they never have had enough medicines in the health centre and the doctor does not go there regularly. It's better to bring our children to the hospital before the diarrhoea worsens.*

Adeling: *Yes, but what would happen if the patient is almost dehydrated; we are so far from the hospital.*

Isabel: *But before you bring the child to the hospital, you should give him 'oresol' (a rehydrating tablet to be dissolved in water). Or you can boil avocado leaves in water and let him drink that. There's an avocado tree in Julie's house. I'll accompany you later, let's ask her for some leaves.*

Adeling: *That's right, I'll do that. Aside from saving me a lot, it's all natural.*

Thelma: *You can also give your child the ABC formula – avocado leaves, bayabas (Filipino for guava) and calamansi (native lemon). I've tried this many times with my children and it works.*

During the workshop, the parents also talked more about the causes of many illnesses and how to prevent them, sharing information about previous practice, and agreeing upon concrete steps that had to be taken. Although much of this information had already been introduced in previous PEP sessions from the first year of the programme, it was still considered necessary because the health problems were recurring. On the process of using the PLA workshops to revisit this topic, the parents had the following to say.

Nora: *I learned more things about ways of treating certain illnesses and how to avoid sickness through this process of sharing with other parents. If before I knew one way, now I have more options.*

Angeling: *What others know, others are learning about.*

Glo: *We're helping each other to plan for ways of avoiding illness. It helps to recall what we've learned and to think of more ways to help each other.*

Apang: *This is very helpful for me because I learned more by relating and analysing how certain illnesses occur at certain times of the year. Somehow, I will know better how to prevent it or what will work to relieve the symptoms and cure the illness.*

The COLF community-based staff also felt it was helpful – especially at this stage of the programme – to:

- engage in a process that helped them to focus more directly on continuing and emerging needs;
- acknowledge and respect the pace at which parents learn or apply what they have learned; and
- offer support for individual parents, to build on the strengths of their group interaction and nurture the support system that exists among them.

They realised how important it is to look at things from the perspective of the learners, and they welcomed the workshops as a way of strengthening the programme and ensuring that its goals would be fulfilled.

Conclusions

It is clear that the Pinatubo programme's basic approaches and methodologies made it an ideal partner for the Effectiveness Initiative: the EI worked harmoniously through what was naturally right for the programme and was able to reach into the heart of its work. This is clear in both of the examples presented. As well as fulfilling their original objectives, the programme's basic approaches and methodologies have also provided insights into how children, parents and project workers had benefited from the Pinatubo programme. For example: parental participation in the programme has been shown to have developed over the years and they became active partners in the programme's development; relationships between parents and workers have become much more open and relaxed (high 'comfort level'); and COLF has developed its understanding of the interpersonal dynamics within the groups of parents as it seeks to understand the programme's impact on the lives of the people.

This emphasis on the personal and interpersonal – on a real coming together to work together – is heartening in terms of the Pinatubo programme's approach. It is through the quality of human relationships that are nurtured at the community level that it is possible to assess whether an organisation and its programme has lived up to its goals of 'living and learning' with the people they set out to serve. ○

Portugal: reflections about the Águeda Movement and the Effectiveness Initiative

Rui d'Espiney

The author is Executive Director of the Instituto das Comunidades Educativas (ICE) in Portugal. In this article he discusses the origins of the Águeda Movement and its special approach to developing a community-based organisation: its original nature; its spirit of seeking; its non-conformity; its independence. He goes on to discuss the ways in which the Águeda Movement's involvement in the Effectiveness Initiative has helped it to revalidate and reinforce the key qualities, attitudes and approaches that appear to have helped to ensure not only its effectiveness, but also its longevity.

Nobody is born, or grows up, completely alone

Following the fall of the dictatorship in April 1974, Portugal entered an epoch of social explosion, especially in the big cities, in the industrial heartlands of Lisbon and Porto, in the fields of the South and – not least – in many of the urban centres of the coast and the interior. It was a time of great enthusiasm: people joined together spontaneously, believing that, by their will to do and act, they would bring about the end of exploitation and oppression. And in this way efforts multiplied, here to support the redistribution of land or the fight against illiteracy; there to counter the power of a manager from the old regime.

It was at this time, in this climate, and with this spirit, that the Águeda Movement was born in the barrios of the town of Águeda, organising itself around specific objectives that included the support of handicapped young children. Unlike most groups in other parts of the country, it wasn't rooted in the political forces that were born and began to develop at that time: its supporters were independent of political parties. But like so many others, it is undoubtedly a true son of what we call the 'Revolution of the carnations', of the energies that were freed, of the 'Enough is enough' attitude that emerged after 50 years of a lack of freedom, of repression and of fear. Like the others, it was fed by generosity, by delivering, by belief in change – and it too cut through legal constraints (by occupying a house for the benefit of young children),

confronted resistance (by writing articles for newspapers and intervening in meetings), and pushed for support (by organising petitions and putting forwards its demands).

And as the country stirred and began to recreate itself, so the Águeda Movement began to grow, sometimes contributing to new ways that the country was mapping out, sometimes using the models of others.

That was how it was ...

The social explosion that followed the 25th of April was carried forward two years later when the State achieved political control, reorganised itself and sought political definition in all the various areas in which it operates. And, as it did so, it sought out those who had

been operating successfully so it could learn from their experiences.

The Águeda Movement was one such source of know-how. Its perspectives on integrating handicapped infants into society were much valued; and its promoters were invited to act rather like trainers in the fora and gatherings that were helping to outline new legislation. It was a time in which the Águeda Movement enjoyed a recognition that reinforced its identity, its self-esteem and the confidence between its members; and that gave it more opportunities for reflection.

But realities change. The State tends to consolidate things, to replace models that offer options with models that impose, that are stereotyped or adulterated, and that owe little to the

essence of the models that it originally found so inspiring. Like other groups in other domains who saw their proposals stripped of their sense, the Águeda Movement was confronted with an official policy for the integration of disadvantaged children that, in practice, was centred on bringing them into line with non-handicapped young children. It had little to do with integrating them in ways that drew on what they could contribute.

The Águeda Movement did not give up. Instead, it recreated itself and – like other groups – disassociated itself from the State to seek community-based alternatives to official policies on integration that it saw as non-viable. In the barrios of the town of Águeda, where higher than average numbers of handicapped children are born, community groups function *de facto* as spaces for the development of alternatives in integrated development.

A case of effectiveness

The Águeda Movement can be seen as unique in comparison with many other groups that were born in 1974. Unique not just because it has survived but because it has stayed true to its original nature: its spirit of seeking; its non-conformity; its independence; and its innovation. In my opinion, it is still too early to fully understand this longevity – that is one of the results that we expect from the investigations within the Effectiveness Initiative (EI). But, from reflections so far, it is possible to propose at least three sets of reasons for the Águeda Movement's survival and success.

In the first place, there is the undoubted contribution of subjectivity and emotion to the life of the Movement, right from the beginning. Other groups born at the same time were structured around political battles. It wasn't so much that passion was absent from such groups, more that their underlying motivation was to do with a concept, a vision of society. In contrast, the Águeda Movement included the inconvenient: the emotions of the people who generated and worked along with the programme. Reason was there, but a reason made subjective by emotion, by the emotional rejection of the injustice that exclusion represents.

A second set of explanations for the longevity of the Movement is to do with the close relationships between all those who benefited – the handicapped young people themselves. This stems from a concern for the well-being of another person, and from recognising the strengths and abilities of that other person. This is what has guided the Movement's promoters from the first. More than being something *for people,* the Movement was *with people.* Linked to this is the fact that people grew within the programme and became confident by constructing solutions and ways of acting or reacting. In doing so, they also became more committed to the programme.

The majority of the organisations that started out at the same time as the Águeda Movement wanted power. But, in contrast with the Águeda Movement, they sought to do so through the ideas and proposals that they had come up with, not so much through the people whom they sought to benefit.

A third set of reasons centres on the fact that the character of the programme was justified by, and grew out of, what it did and how it did it. One core factor is that the Águeda Movement organised itself for concrete action, finding immediate solutions that derived from the local circumstances, needs and possibilities. These were solutions that did not depend on options imposed from outside, or the decisions of people who were external to the context. In this way, the Movement grew both in what it achieved and in how it achieved that.

In many other organisations, even those that focused on concrete concerns (for example: ending the colonial war in Mozambique; or redistribution of lands), solutions came not from the local level but from above. Such solutions were short term rather than long term, and also worked against community mobilisation.

Naturally, there are other factors that need to be taken into account – for example, the Movement's non-conformity and the perseverance of its promoters in the face of all the difficulties they encountered. All these factors contribute to explaining the Movement's longevity, its ability to change 'No' into 'Yes', and its attempts to overcome obstacles through innovation and development. Other groups knew about such factors too but

Portugal: *support to families from Timor* (Instituto das Comunidades Educativas – ICE)
photo: Teresa Moreno, Bernard van Leer Foundation

After an initial process that
defined and built the
Águeda Movement, it was
launched as a kind of fabric
that consisted of
autonomous but
interwoven initiatives,
formal and informal, that
were made up of spaces and
times (some programmed
in, some *ad hoc*) for action
and reflection. In addition
– and unlike what
happened in other groups
and organisations – the
financial support that it
received (for example, that
from the Aga Khan
Foundation) helped it to
grow and to keep going.

It is because of such
attributes that the Águeda
Movement almost had a
duty to take part in the EI
as an example of effectiveness. But,
curiously, the call to participate in the
EI coincided with a time in which the
Movement was passing through a crisis:

did not really take them to heart or give
them their due importance. As a result,
these factors did not have the influence
that they should have had.

people were getting stuck in routines,
separated from each other by the
demands of the mass of activities that
they had to animate, and dulled by the
daily rhythm of meetings and
exchanges. Also the sharing of passion
and affection that had helped to
make the Movement what it was,
was fading away.

Given these conditions, the
participation of the Águeda Movement
in the EI had to take two worries into
account, or rather, had to pursue two
objectives simultaneously. Handled
badly, this could have led to conflict.

On the one hand there was the need to
re-link the Movement again with its
own unique identity. For the members
of the Águeda Movement, therefore,
the EI was not seen as a research
project but an opportunity to
(re)construct the emotions, intentions,
values and actions of the Movement. It
was not enough to just involve all the
actors, they had to be promoted as the
owners of the knowledge, knowledge
that was not merely *about* action but
that was actually *for* action, that was
not just about the past but also about
the future that it would help to weave.

In short, it was necessary to embed the
EI in the Águeda Movement in ways
that would allow the (re)creation of its
synergies and power.

On the other hand there was the need
for distance, for the external view that
any enquiry implies. It was a matter of
bringing outside perspectives to bear,
and creating more objective spaces in
which the results of these could be
reflected on.

Resolving these contradictory
objectives involved blending enquiry
with strategic action. To use
Andaloussi's terminology:

*... a collective work that conceives,
organises, carries out, analyses and
evaluates the process that is going on.[1]*

In this, the 'process' is not just that of
the EI but more that of the Águeda
Movement; and the intention was an
enquiry that would ...

*... articulate explanations,
commitments and applications.[2]*

What is meant by this is the reasons,
the affection and the actions.

In practice, what was proposed and carried out was that people involved in the investigation should grow through the solutions that they produced, feel ownership of them, and feed them back into the realities in which they work. But they should also rediscover what had united them in the past: that affection that was once central to the Movement, and that they consciously recovered during their journey of investigation. Throughout the process, they also had to hold the balance between what was emerging from the perspective of insiders, and what was emerging from the outsider's viewpoint.

From group to team: the role of the outsider

From the beginning, the EI encountered problems in working with an Águeda EI team. The Águeda Movement always functioned as a kind of 'extended family' whose members met each other when problems arose and tried to find solutions to them. There wasn't a core group, and it wasn't easy to create one. That meant that the EI lacked a nucleus to sustain the continuity of its investigation. But, in truth, to have had a core group would have been against the culture of the organisation.

The solution was a challenge: an open group, flexible in composition, that was directed by ongoing reflections about the processes and outcomes of the investigation, rather than by any imposed preconceptions. But it produced results: despite rotation among its eight to ten members, it was stable and moved forward progressively and cohesively.

The group questioned the need for outsiders, as proposed by the Bernard van Leer Foundation. It felt that the presence of outsiders would distort the investigation. This was not because they were outsiders *per se* but, above all, because of the weight that the views of outsiders could have – especially if an outsider was given the role of team leader, as the Foundation proposed.

This was resolved by a mixture of good sense, learning about the kinds of attitudes that outsiders might have, and then reinforcing in all members of the EI team a set of standpoints that would help to keep the investigation balanced.

These were:
- identification with the objectives and problems of the Movement;
- emotional empathy with the Movement;
- holding a balance between the external and the internal in the group's reflection (sometimes returning findings for reflection, sometimes reflecting on the findings themselves);
- maintaining respect in listening to each member of the group, and respecting their rhythms; and
- successfully facing the challenge of the ongoing effort of taking the 'problemising' approach to action and reality.

Last words

Through its participation in the EI, the Águeda Movement has reconstructed its identity. It recognises itself, once again, in the battle against the exclusion of handicapped young people. This has allowed it to reposition itself in that battle, as it has devised collective reactions to new forms of exclusion. Today, it can be said to have an almost mystical sense of duty, one that welcomes challenges.

The Movement seized the opportunity that the EI offered and, as the agent of its own development, transformed itself in line with what it has discovered about itself through the EI.

In looking for the always unfinished and always unique story of the Águeda Movement, I am reminded – mischievously – of Cervantes' words:

There is no power on earth
That could possibly aspire
To change the world
Once time has passed ...   ❍

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India: Self Employed Women's Association

The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India began by running childcare centres for women working in the informal sector, who needed centres that flexibly met their needs. It shifted from simply providing a valuable service to women, to focusing on high quality childcare; and the programme has expanded rapidly in reaction to massive demand while still holding quality. This article discusses techniques and tools that have been and are being developed and employed as SEWA – a strong, well established and effective organisation – has used the Effectiveness Initiative (EI) and its processes to improve its approaches and operations.

SEWA has used the outcomes of its involvement in the EI to strengthen its own capacity and its operational competence. This is parallel to what has happened in the Philippines (page 22), and in Portugal (page 32). In doing so, SEWA has employed a variety of techniques to identify needs for training and for tools to support the development of expertise among the childcare workers.

Teachers' diaries
Teachers now write daily diaries that are then shared with others at a monthly in-service meeting. While at the present time these are somewhat limited in terms of what is included in the diary, SEWA expects to support a gradual evolution of this tool to centre more on activities and issues. One current restriction is that writing is not a common activity for the childcare providers; it will take time before they can record in a more meaningful way.

Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)
PLA tools have generated a very positive response from the SEWA EI team. So far they have used pie charts (here they are called roti charts) and matrices. One use of the roti chart technique included parents who, together with staff, looked at the costs of running childcare, breaking these down into the various items that need to be paid for. They then looked at how much (the slices of the roti) was paid for by parent fees and government subsidies, and this revealed the gap that had to be covered from other sources. One of the immediate outcomes was that the parents decided the fees needed to be raised from 15 Rupees they were paying per month to 20 Rupees. The staff felt that these visual techniques were extremely useful with parents and teachers, and are planning to use more of them.

Local committees
To strengthen work in the individual centres, committees of local people have been formed. Members have been trained in how to operate a centre (for example: how to keep track of funds; manage the centre; operate a quality programme; and so on). These committees have been strengthened considerably, and are gaining skills to become much more self-reliant in operational terms. However, given the economics of the populations that the centres serve, they are unlikely to ever become sustainable economically.

Technical Teams
To support the development of training activities, Technical Teams have been created. These consist of supervisors, leaders of the unions of women who are associated with childcare, and SEWA staff. The teams develop future activities, and oversee the training and in-service process. They meet monthly and, in addition to handling routine administrative concerns, pertinent topics from field experience are presented and discussed.

Spearhead Teams
To complement the Technical Teams, existing Spearhead Teams have been employed to strengthen the women's unions and help to guide their activities. The composition of the Spearhead Teams is 80 percent union members and 20 percent SEWA staff .

Children's profiles
Histories of children's involvement in the centres are now being supplemented with photographs. This will help SEWA

to follow some of these children over time, since they will have a photographic record of who the child was when he/she began in the programme. Mothers have responded to this very enthusiastically.

Tracer activities
SEWA is undertaking a number of initiatives to follow-up children who have been through its centres. One of these is to look at how children are doing in terms of schooling following their experience in the childcare centres. To get a gross measure of tracing, SEWA staff organised two 'melas' (fairs) in which all the children who had 'graduated' from the centres came together for a day of games and celebration. Many hundreds attended.

Linked to this – and to the children's profiles – is work by an American post-graduate student on placement with SEWA to tell the stories of eight children. This will include a write up of who the child is, the kind of family the child comes from, and so on; and will be accompanied by photos of the child at home and in school.

Although this follow-up of children is only operating at a fairly simple level at the moment, there is the potential for a more systematic tracing of children who participated in the programme. This would need a full-fledged project. One challange is that SEWA has no baseline data on the children who have passed through its centres, nor do they have comparison possibilities, since they would have no access to villages where the children did not go to a childcare centre. However SEWA is beginning a programme for adolescent girls in new villages, and it will gather profiles of these girl's histories when they enter the programme. This might provide indications of what would have happened to the SEWA children if they had not participated in the SEWA childcare programme.

Nutrition campaign
As part of its EI participation, SEWA looked at children's nutritional records in the centres. They discovered several things: that some teachers were using the growth scale inaccurately and so had a poor sense of the children's nutritional status; and that some teachers were good at collecting the data, but did not know what to do with the results. In several centres there was, in fact, a negative growth curve for many children. SEWA responded by having staff who were known to families stay with a number of them for 24 hours and record the quality and quantity of food available, how it was cooked, the families' eating patterns, and how the food was distributed. They discovered:

- that the food was balanced nutritionally, but there was not enough of it;
- that the family never ate together – in fact, men and boys ate first, followed by women and girls; and
- that food was distributed unequally, with men and boys getting most, and women and girls getting the remainder.

As a result, SEWA is beginning a nutrition campaign to make people more aware of how they can prepare their current foods in a more nutritional way, and to encourage families to eat together and share food more equitably.

Work with children in times of disaster
There have been two major disasters during the time the EI has been in place. In fact SEWA talks about the timing of the EI as beginning with a major cyclone and taking root at the time of a major earthquake – two interesting elements in a timeline! EI participation, and the kinds of processes that go with it, were therefore in play as SEWA gained a mass of experience in what providing childcare can mean in a time of disaster. Two key areas of interest here are bringing services and some 'normality' to children's lives, and the ways in which childcare can become the focus for community activities. In both disasters, SEWA centres became central points for food distribution, feeding, and health services. In addition, they served as 'schools' when the formal schools were destroyed. Older children joining in the activities in the centres created a kind of child-to-child effect.

Policy actions
After a year and a half of working with India's Central Welfare Board, SEWA has convinced them that childcare centres that charge fees should also be eligible to receive state aid, if the population being served is unable to pay the full costs of the service. This has set a precedent.

Pay and working conditions
SEWA is committed to, and working towards, paying its childcare workers India's national minimum wage and bringing working hours into line with the needs of working women.

Overall, participation in the EI has given SEWA new ways to look at its work. It has created tools and processes that have generated an on-going process of reflection, leading to new and more effective actions.   ○

Peru:
the role of the animator: the complex interface between PRONOEI and community

Fiorella Lanata Piazzon

The author is an anthropologist who joined the Effectiveness Initiative (EI) Peru team to coordinate the gathering and analysis of data from PRONOEI in Puno. PRONOEI is the acronym for Programas no Escolarizados de Educación Inicial, one of the earliest initial education programmes in Latin America. In this article, the author discusses an investigation into how parents of young children saw the programme and its animators, and how these perceptions affected the programme's effectiveness.

In April 2000, we completed an investigation in four communities in Puno, the region in the South of Peru from which the PRONOEI programme originated. The point of the investigation was to learn lessons from PRONOEI's accumulated experience with community animators and – especially – to find out how effective the community animators had been in the eyes of families. To do this, we selected two Quechua-speaking and two Aymará-speaking communities; and a team of anthropologists ran a workshop with parents from each community to gather information about various aspects of the programme. In addition, the anthropologists carried out observations and interviews to deepen their understanding of the themes that most interested the families.

The work of the team was based on three questions.
1. What were the objectives of the programme, as the families saw them?
2. How did they see the profile and roles of the animator?
3. How did these perceptions impact on the effectiveness of the PRONOEI programme?

Outcomes 1: PRONOEI and its objectives

From the answers the families gave to the first question, the team assembled two sets of descriptive words and short phrases.
PRONOEI as an education programme: *'part of education', 'progress', 'reading and writing'*, and so on.
PRONOEI as a social programme of daily care for children
'it helps us', 'happiness', 'house of children', 'play', and so on.

Overall, the answers fuse together into one single definition: 'PRONOEI is a *home* where children *learn*'.

In Peru, the idea of education as the means for people to achieve progress is deeply ingrained in rural populations. Thus, it is no surprise that in the investigation, the word 'education', together with words such as 'progress', 'development' and 'future', are associated with PRONOEI – and therefore with formal education. People see education as the start of a road that, ideally, helps them to improve themselves, leave the communities and cultures that they were born into, and become part of wider society and the national culture. They think that education produces progress.

In the eyes of parents, the role of PRONOEI in the social development of children, and its role in their motor-cognitive development (something that is much more about formal education) were seen as intertwined, inextricably linked. In order that children can be educated they have to attend some kind of school or centre, and this implies a great deal of previous social learning. For example, they have to be used to being away from their families, with other children and under the supervision of a stranger.

But the advantages that the parents see in the PRONOEI programme are not just

of an educational nature: they are also about preparation for life. Spanish, for example, is a necessary tool for formal schooling but is also important in many social and economic senses as well. Parents concluded that 'children who are confined to their homes are children who are standing still'. It is in PRONOEI that they have their first contacts with others and begin the process of adapting to the education system.

Using illustrations and stories about days in lives of children, parents showed the ways in which their children benefited from the PRONOEI programme – and also showed what they felt was lost by those children who did not participate. Children who did not participate were shown as dirty, unkempt, sad, abandoned – in one case a child was represented as an orphan! In contrast, children who did attend the programme were shown as happy, playing with their companions, clean and tidy, alive and sharp.

Children who don't go, don't know what day it is, always play alone. They can hardly mix with other people because they are almost like little savages or animals. It's because they are afraid of people.

Its as if they are locked up in their homes. But those who attend the PRONOEI programme know how to read, identify trees, distinguish colours. They call the animator 'teacher'. They build up their confidence together.

In the Children's House they are taught to behave and to interact with others – become civilised. Here, those that have fear, learn to lose their fear. It is as if they were in their own homes, learning to play and talk without fear. That leaves us to concentrate on helping them acquire more knowledge.

They know their companions and where they can safely go together. Those that don't attend the programme just walk with their dogs, only know Quechua. They also fear people and animals, don't mix easily with others. When they get to school, they don't know how to hold a pencil, how to write, don't understand the teacher.

Although PRONOEI is officially called an initial education programme, parents see it more as place where children are cared for each day. Parents who think that formal education is poor (perhaps because they themselves started their own education when they were older) ask if older children can also take part in the programme.

It's good for those who do go: they have a good time ... But what about the children who are always on the street with nowhere to play. Suddenly, their parents want to take them all to the plaza and leave them there because it's not so dangerous.

Other evidence that parents value the daily care aspect of PRONOEI is the fact that a number of them indicated that the opening times of the centres should match up with their own hours of work, so that they can collect their children after work, or be at home ready to received them.

Outcomes 2: expectations of the role of the animator

Through drama, the parents presented their perceptions of what a typical day in each centre is like, and how to obtain resources. From this, it was possible to discover what they felt about the animators and the implications of this in practice.

The general role of the animator emerged as to teach the children, making them learn things. Because of this, it is very important that they are friends with the children – but not so much that they lose control. They have to be able to maintain order at the same time as keeping the children happy. For the parents, the most important thing was learning to write. Reading, knowing vowels, knowing Spanish, and having a school certificate were also mentioned, but with less frequency.

There were many other replies not related to formal education about what the animator should provide. We call these 'family care' elements because they are the kinds of things that a mother typically does with/for her children. These include: making recommendations; caring for them; toileting them and training them to toilet themselves; teaching them their names and addressing them by name or by their relationship or kinship to

others; and making sure that they are fed properly. But the function that parents most expect from the animator is to help children lose their fear of being away from their parents. This is linked to helping them adapt, at this half way stage between home and school, to meeting unknown people and dealing with new rules.

Parents also expected the animators to establish good relationships with them. The animators have responsibility for the well-being of the building in which the programme operates. That means that they have to devise and sustain activities that maintain and repair the building, and that replenish the materials that the children use. Parents expect animators to have meetings with them in which such things can be discussed, and to organise obligatory work days to make games for the children. In two of the communities, it was obvious that the animators had made at least half of the games themselves.

The animators are also responsible for attracting children to the programme. When a centre closed, it was because not enough children attended. When this

happened, the parents blamed it on the disinterest of the animator. The opinion of parents is that the animator must motivate the community in every way:

... she has to animate the community to ensure that the building is repaired. That will help us to respect her as a good animator ... She must drive these activities along and gain the respect of the community. If she does this, we parents will commit ourselves to working with her for years.

Parents frequently made remarks about formal aspects of being an animator. These included: 'that she keeps good time'; and 'that she is prepared for work and, above all, is a responsible person'. But what does it mean for an animator to be responsible? Some parents defined this as being present in the centre from the moment of opening until it closes. Many expected more: that the animators should collect the children from their homes in the morning and take them back there at the end of the day – and if the parents had not yet returned, then to take the children to their own homes until the parents return from work and could collect their children.

In response to the profile that the animator needs if the programme is to work well, a small group of parents wanted the animator to come from outside the community because she would be 'better prepared'. However, the great majority wanted their animators to come from their own community. The reasons given were: that they would have the time; that good communications between them and the parents would be easier to maintain (necessary to promote good parental participation in the programme); that they could count on the support of their own community; and, above all, that they would be people who could support families, especially in accompanying children between their homes and the centres.

Other advantages in having a local animator included: better cooperation between them and the parents in other community activities; and better control by the community over the animator's work. In addition, parents felt that local animators were more appropriate to help children make the transition from home to the centre in which the PRONOEI programme operates because the children would already know them.

Taking the four communities together, it was clear that the communities in which the animator was an outsider wanted them to be more responsible people. In contrast, the communities that had a local animator wanted them to be better educators. A number of mothers had thought about taking their children away from the programme because of the irresponsibility of the non-local animators; yet other parents wanted local animators to be more like the non-locals.

We want the animators to teach our children well and we would like to monitor this and have some control ... she wants to teach them all to write neatly and well. But first they should learn to recognise colours, then to write.

We could help the animators, give them advice about teaching our children well. If not, our children will not do well when they go to formal school and this will mean that the prestige of her and our community remains low.

Teach the bigger ones to write, and the small ones to play.

Reflections

According to the parents consulted during this investigation, the ideal role for animators is mostly about formal education. This made us reflect about the perceptions that they have about the effectiveness of the programme, given what this must mean about their expectations.

What has emerged is that they see two roles for the animators: one oriented to education; the other to the social development of their children and the maintenance of what it means to be a person growing up in these traditional communities. At first sight these two findings do not seem to be in conflict – in fact, they complement each other. But the problems arise in practice: in trying to guarantee one of these, the other may be jeopardised. In the eyes of the communities, non-local animators may be better prepared yet may also be irresponsible in that they do not respond to the implicit expectations of the community (gathering the children and looking after them in the absence of the parents, for example). On the other hand, a local animator may ensure that the programme operates

Peru: *parents drawing at a workshop about children who do and those who don't go to the PRONOEI preschool.*
photo: Servios Urbanos para Mujeres de Bajos Ingresos (SUMBI)

well in most ways yet may not be able to maintain the education at an adequate level because of the scarcity of training for them by the Ministry of Education.

This is not so much an irresolvable conflict as a simple reality in these communities, one that affects the ways in which the parents appreciate and commit themselves to the programme – or not. For us, there are still some outstanding questions: How is the effectiveness of PRONOEI affected by the conflicts between the expectations of the roles and functions of the animators, and the profiles of the local and non-local animators? What is the impact of the personal strengths of the animators on the pertinence of the programme? Have do these roles and functions contribute to making PRONOEI an effective programme?   ○

Colombia:
an environment of credibility:
a key element for effective action

Fernando Peñaranda

The author is a member of the Effectiveness Initiative (EI) team in Colombia that is investigating effectiveness in the Proyecto de Mejoramiento Educativo, de Salud y del Ambiente (PROMESA), a community mobilisation project that began 25 years ago on the isolated Pacific coast of Colombia. PROMESA was operated from 1977 to 1998 by Centro Internacional de Educación y Desarrollo Humano (CINDE), a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that carries out social, educational, and human development projects focused on the healthy development of children. From 1998, the project was operated by Centro de Investigaciones para el Desarrollo Autosostenible Local (CIDEAL), an NGO of local personnel that supports community processes.

In participating in the EI, stakeholders in PROMESA saw that it was important to find out what people consider to have been effective, and how their perceptions have changed over the years. EI work in the project consisted of a study that was carried out with participants in the PROMESA project; advisers of CINDE and of CIDEAL; other organisations with which PROMESA has coordinated activities; municipalities; and children and mothers who have used the project's services. The central question of the study was: 'What lessons have been learned during the life of the project?'

This article draws on that study to discuss what is now seen as the key importance of credibility to the effectiveness of the project, showing its relationship with other important elements that have been identified in the process of validating the information that the study is producing.

As a result of the EI study of the PROMESA project, the groups involved in the study have established that credibility is a necessity if a project is to be effective.

Information for the study was gathered by interviews and workshops with different participants in the project. This information was then analysed, and the analyses were validated by taking them back to the people who had provided the information so they could not just discuss and refine the analyses, but also add to them. This article therefore presents a way of understanding credibility and its importance from the point of view of all the stakeholders.

The theme of credibility emerged as a constant in the interrelations between all who participated in the project, serving as a model for establishing factors in effectiveness. It also led us to carry out a preliminary analysis that itself was an example for establishing relationships between other elements in the project.

The project's credibility was born in the environment of real confidence that it generated. Before PROMESA, community members really lacked confidence because they lived in a reality in which their values and knowledge had never been recognised and in which they were little valued or respected. As they saw it, their experiences with other institutions

and projects had been shaped by party political relationships and corruption, and this contributed to a climate of non-confidence and caution with others.

Once CINDE began its work, the climate began to evolve into something more favourable. Confidence in people, in the community, in the organisations and in the project grew; and the project's credibility increased as these reinforced each other and brought out each other's potential. The roots of credibility lie in the feeling in community members that they were starting to feel valued and respected by PROMESA, when, as many of them reiterated in the study,

'They believed in me'.

But why did people feel that the PROMESA project believed in them? There are four factors that can be seen as key in PROMESA: the project's nature (its philosophy, policies, methods and objectives, and the ways in which these were intended to promote people's development); the attitudes of the advisers to the project; the human relationships; and the construction of a safe learning environment. The first two

of these factors are discussed in detail below; the last two recur throughout.

But it was the interrelation of these factors that produced the necessary conditions for people to feel valued because they were valued, and because their culture, their knowledge and their capabilities were recognised. In addition, being valued contributed to their sense of self-worth, something that they had previously lacked. All of this allowed them to prove to themselves and to others that they could be agents in their own transformation and in that of the environment in which they live.

The nature of the project: *'They taught us how to fish'*

The nature of the project as it is defined above, can be also established from testimonies that illustrate very well how people regarded it.

They didn't give us fish, they taught us how to fish.
We were part of …
They trained us for action.
They never abandoned us.

The study shows that people saw education, based on a flexible model of learning that responded to people's needs and that encouraged community participation, as one of the most significant elements in driving forward personal development.

In addition, education in this form was seen as the most important and valuable element in PROMESA. Indeed it almost defined and shaped the project by allowing people to develop the knowledge and abilities necessary for them to direct the project, resolve its problems, and so on. Participation was closely linked to this and helped to carry things forward by establishing an environment in which people had opportunities to act.

Providing education and enabling participation can be understood as two sides of the same coin: on one side, strengthening people's skills and knowledge so they resolved their own problems; and on the other, generating the conditions necessary for the application of those new skills and that new knowledge in a real process of applying theory to practice. It was a

matter of education for action, and for the means to carry out that action.

Within this, participative evaluation was regarded as a critically important force for learning. In an environment of mutual confidence in which relationships were constructive and people felt safe, it was possible to establish permanent mechanisms for evaluation at all levels that enabled reflection on what was being done. At the same time, the advisers – who continued to work to enhance people's skills and knowledge in evaluation – were also seen as a constant source of help, a continuing stimulus that helped to overcome people's anxieties, conflicts and uncertainties. Essentially, people had confidence in each adviser; and the advisors offered ongoing support, even when they were not there.

It is worth stressing the conviction of the different stakeholders in PROMESA that the nature of the project was a result of its inclusiveness: it directed its energies to all the people of the community, in contrast to traditional approaches in which only the most capable were selected to participate in

Colombia
photo: Centro Internacional de Educación y Desarrollo Humano (CINDE)

coordinating action. In PROMESA, housewives and small farmers alike – with little formal preparation – were transformed into highly competent people who were able to carry out the project. Very significant in this respect is the wide recognition that the paraprofessionals earned as a result of their work and their abilities.

Attitudes and values of the advisors: *'They recognised us as people'*

The institutional philosophy, as manifested in the attitudes and values of the project advisers, was seen as key in generating the environment of credibility. The stakeholders in the project reiterated the importance of horizontal relationships with the advisers, relationships that were human and warm, and based on mutual respect and on valuing local knowledge and culture. There is no doubt that these established a feeling of confidence and helped to build productive and secure learning environments.

The sensitivity of the project advisers towards the needs and problems of

people, and of the community in general, were evident in many ways: the project advisers recognised the personal and cultural characteristics of the stakeholders, worked flexibly with them and, above all, kept in mind their worries and needs. Also notable were their example, their commitment and their sense of responsibility to the work, and to meeting the project's goals and objectives. In addition, the 'culture of hard work' that was established was very different from the rhythms that the stakeholders were used to. But this arduous work was carried out in a friendly and human way. Long and demanding work days revolved around group activities, thereby helping to consolidate teamwork: the people knew they could count on others to help to resolve the difficulties that arose in their daily work.

Finally, the project advisers were outstanding in the ways in which they changed their relationships with the people of the communities. Traditionally, such workers had underestimated people in poor communities because of their low

socio-economic status and because they had little formal education. This encouraged an environment of distrust and caution. Transforming these kinds of relationships into something more human and constructive bonded advisers and local people. The result was that all felt that they were working together in resolving the problems of the community.

These attitudes and ways of working were also transmitted to the leaders (the promoters; those who extended the coverage of the project; and the local advisers) and to other organisations. For example, the promoters showed it in affirming: 'We learned to reach parents' and relating this to such elements as their own flexibility, and their interest in the worries and problems of the parents. In this, they went beyond official project activities, and established spaces for parental participation.

These attitudes and values were disseminated more widely, and influenced other institutions and groups, thanks to coherence between the actions of the advisors and their philosophical premises. Teaching by example was a key factor, not only for them but also for the promoters.

Credibility of the project: 'PROMESA was not just promises'

From the start, all stakeholders in the project were worried about achieving the proposed goals and objectives – that is, about fulfilling PROMESA's promises to the community (the acronym PROMESA is also Spanish for 'promise'). In contrast with previous projects and programmes, PROMESA was characterised by constancy and persistence, and by a 'search for other methods or other roads' to ensure success: 'PROMESA was not just promises'. In this sense, participative evaluation has been crucial, as will become clear from the next part of this article.

The fact that planning and evaluation depended on participation by representatives of all the various sectors of the community, allowed plans of action to be constructed collectively, and for the results to be fed back to the community – results relating to the achievements and difficulties; the use of resources; the successful carrying through of the programming; and the performance of the different stakeholders. Participative planning and evaluation were valuable instruments in guaranteeing that project objectives and goals were met. But they also constituted a powerful instrument of communication, ensuring that everyone knew what was happening.

All this contributed to the project being perceived as effective, efficient and transparent: people saw that 'things were done well'. Interesting in this sense are reflections about the role of CINDE that emerged from the EI study. Some years after CINDE stopped working in the area, information about children who had benefited from the preschools showed that, as young adults, few of them had remained in the community. The reason? They were studying in different universities, something that is not at all common among young people in this part of Colombia.

Overall, both the evaluation of the project and its effects reveal that CINDE cared about what happened in the lives of the people with and through whom it works.

The project's outcomes strengthened the environment of credibility

The results achieved brought about the environment of credibility, as much as did the processes through which the project reached its aims and objectives. Three elements and the ways in which they interact, have been key in constructing overall credibility: the credibility of the promoters; the credibility of the organisations and institutions involved; and the credibility of the community.

A variety of disparate factors determined the credibility of the paraprofessionals in the eyes of the community. They were obviously outstanding in terms of the level of competence they reached, their positive self image as paraprofessionals, and their skill and sense of responsibility in solving problems; and they were also appropriate interlocutors or spokespeople for the community because of their nature, abilities, knowledge, ways of establishing respectful and horizontal relations with people, and, in general, their commitment to the needs of individuals

and the community as a whole. These factors crucially underpinned their competence and their legitimacy in doing their work within the project.

The credibility of local organisations and institutions grew in the eyes of those with whom they worked – for example, in the coordination of plans, strategies and activities. Different kinds of formal, non-formal and informal training contributed to this, especially training that emphasised promoting relationships that were more human, more respectful and more productive. Likewise, the coordination that was achieved between some organisations and institutions (which in some cases went as far as jointly agreeing and producing planning and evaluation processes) produced better outcomes. Similar processes among other stakeholders in the project also had similar effects – for example, systematic and coordinated work to bring the local population together with organisations and institutions helped dialogue and mutual recognition.

Within the community, the family was the focal point both in terms of education and of possibilities for participation and organisation, and this allowed collective and personal growth. Bases were created for the development of knowledge and abilities to improve people's lives, and spaces for participation were opened that ensured that people felt that they were important in the development of the project.

The credibility of the paraprofessionals and the organisations and institutions and – above all – the credibility that people were gaining for themselves, generated important synergies that facilitated the solving of collective and individual problems.

Overall, the general perception was that the most important achievements of the project were those related to the growth of the people and their community. Their learning, the nature of the attitudes that they developed, the quality of the human relationships that evolved, and their understanding of early

childhood, all these add up to lasting human achievements. The following testimonies illustrate this.

Many of the children that passed through the preschool are capable of becoming professionals.
The most important part of the project was the training and the results it has on the families. We learned to respect children and to want more for them.

Conclusions

This article presents some of the initial findings from the EI work with PROMESA. Credibility was identified by everyone who participated as a necessity if a project is to be effective – and credibility starts from mutual trust and confidence among all of those involved. That this is the case is evident from the nature of the project and its core focus on human development – on the human being. It is also evident in the nature of the training provided; and in the ways in which the project helped people to realise their potential through

participation that reveals their capacities to resolve their problems and meet their needs.

Key is PROMESA's model of education and its pedagogical nature. Given this, it is essential that all theoretical principles and methodologies are in line with the needs of this kind of liberal education, an education that enables the kinds of collective and individual growth that makes social change possible. This is why the project was perceived as enduring: it produced changes, and the most important of these were in people.   ❍

Kenya:
from objective outsider to objective insider:
an experiential case of give and take

Peter Mwaura

The author is Lead Researcher with the Madrasa Resource Centre (MRC) in Kenya. In this article, he discusses his experiences in trying to hold the objective perspectives of an outsider researcher while recognising the need to go beyond psychometrical and methodological approaches. He argues that pragmatic and utilitarian considerations must be taken into account; and that researchers will often need to operate from within the project – to become 'insiders' – if they are to really understand what is happening in projects, and what therefore is helping to make them effective.

The MRC Regional Research Programme

Many intervention projects today are conscious of the need to include research as an integral part of their activities. This demand for research is derived from the need for project accountability to the stakeholders and beneficiaries, and the need for informed decision making processes. Emerging from these needs are questions about how the effectiveness of the research is affected by the nature of the placement of researchers in a project: are they to be 'insiders' or 'outsiders'? To determine this means reflecting on a number of questions, including: 'What are the mandates of researchers in an organisation?' and 'How does an organisation ensure that it maximises the utility of researchers?' and 'Isn't there a need for a balance between insider and outsider perspectives', and 'How can this be achieved?' Because of such questions, the whole subject of the merits and demerits of placing a researcher as an institutional outsider or insider is clearly a topic for consideration within the framework of the Effectiveness Initiative (EI).

In making decisions about the placement of the researcher, two conflicting schools of thought arise in relation to the utility, nature and requirements of research. One school of thought is oriented towards the scientific rigour of research (something that calls for quantitative justifications), and towards the need to retain the objectivity of research processes (something that gives validity and reliability to the research processes and outcomes). The quantitative research school of thought is more comfortable when the research design tends more to the experimental than non-experimental end of the research design continuum. The other school of thought (which is more oriented to management needs) focuses on the utility of research in giving answers to more immediate

they are an insider or an outsider. I also believe that researchers with an insider's perspective have more to contribute than do those with an outsider's perspective. This is because of their thorough understanding of, and integration with, the projects.

To set the context for my arguments, I start by looking at the practical and theoretical bases of MRC operations that gave rise to the operational philosophy of the project: working in partnership with everyone; and participation for all. Following this, I consider how the research programme relates to this philosophy. I then consider the process of integrating the research within the framework defined by the philosophy, before concluding with some thoughts about the lessons I learned in the process of transforming from an outsider to an insider.

MRC operations and their practical and theoretical bases

Research is one of the three technical dimensions of the operations of Madrasa Resource Centre. The other two are: teacher training and mentoring; and

managerial concerns. As such, it is more comfortable with the collection of qualitative information, information that is seen to be too subjective to the quantitative school of thought.

I found myself torn between the two when I began my work in the MRC. In fact, I found that I moved from the hard line stance of an objective outsider to that of an objective insider. I want to explore this here, and to argue for the need to go beyond psychometrical and methodological perfectionism in determining researcher roles. I shall argue that pragmatic and utilitarian considerations must be taken into account, and that researchers need time and support well beforehand to understand the background, objectives and operations of the project.

The central hypothesis in this article is that researchers must keep the scientific skills of an objective scientific research methodology separate from the implementation processes inside the project. In my view, this is a necessary skill acquired by a researcher whether

community development. The teacher training and mentoring dimension is concerned with the training and provision of technical support to the preschool teachers and other stakeholders and beneficiaries. The community development dimension is engaged in social marketing in the community, sensitising and educating community members, and mobilising them to support the provision of quality early childhood education and care. The research dimension is the most recent, dating from the conceptualisation of the second phase of MRC operations. It was designed to complete the structure of the project and contribute to greater synergy between the project's other two dimensions. As Lead Researcher, I was appointed in 1998 with an initial mandate to undertake a quantitative study on project impact.

MRC started out as an intervention project in a Muslim community in Kenya, and is based on needs and strategies identified by that community. It was founded on the principle of sensitising the community and mobilising its social and economic resources to address educational needs.

The project was initially conceptualised in Kenya and later expanded into Tanzania and Uganda. It responded to the fact that the children of Muslim communities had inadequate access to local primary schools and limited options for early education. This was mainly due to the low socio-economic status of the communities and to a Muslim religious educational system that – although highly valued and viewed by many as an good educational option – had limited secular coverage. This deficiency gave children a comparative disadvantage in securing places in the secular school system and, later, in the labour market.

It was clear that the community knew what its problem was, but principles and strategies had to be developed that would cater for these various contextual factors, and direct the operations of MRC. The operational philosophy and strategies of the MRC are therefore based on a number of contextual and theoretical factors. These include the need to integrate both cultural and religious values into secular education; the need to find and use community resources and strengths; and the need to

take into consideration known facts about child development. The communities saw the solution as lying in the establishment of quality ECD centres that would ensure their children's school and learning readiness while maintaining their cultural and religious norms. Further, given the learning deficiencies that were evident, a choice was made for a child-centred curriculum that included health issues, and the development of personality and of skills relating to learning how to learn. The curriculum was therefore based on the High/Scope* oriented active learning curriculum, but adapted to suit the local situation. The resultant centres use effective, community-based, and low cost approaches to early childhood education that promote educational excellence in Muslim children, and they aim to provide access to quality, culturally appropriate and affordable education. Strategies have been progressively developed over the years to achieve these ends.

So early childhood centres were established to be managed by the communities themselves, with backup support by MRC to facilitate technical,

organisational and financial sustainability. Teachers are trained and communities sensitised, educated and mobilised. Schools are supported in creating effective management structures and in providing a quality teaching and learning environment for children. To accomplish these goals, a working philosophy has emerged among the staff. This binds them together – something that is strengthened by frequent feedback and consultation sessions – and each individual contributes to the best of his or her ability. The philosophy of community empowerment calls, in a very special way, for the placement of research within the operations of the organisation, not only for the provision of information for decision making, but also to demonstrate what helps to keep the programme on track.

The research dimension was conceptualised as being crucial in informing stakeholders and beneficiaries on issues such as effectiveness, impact, accountability, planning and development. But it has had to be organised so that it collects and analyses data in ways that respond to the

requirements of those who will use the information.

Integrating research with the project's philosophy

Upon employment, my focus as researcher was on designing the research on impact, and implementing it in such a way that both process and outcomes were adequately objective and valid. To this end I visited other projects to study their research design and operations. One of the immediate challenges in the design was the realisation that it was relatively difficult to talk about a control group when dealing with human beings. For example, it was quite clear that the children with no preschool experience who comprised the control group, could not be kept out of preschool just for the sake of the research. This indicated that, as much as we wanted to have complete scientific objectivity, it was not possible. We therefore changed the language from 'control' to 'comparison' group.

It took some time and effort for me to understand the organisation in terms of its defining variables, history, objectives, mission, operations and structure. This

was done through what I call the reading-talking-listening-meeting-visiting-writing process. I went through the documentation available in the organisation and, as a back up, interviewed the MRC staff on various aspects of the project. This was done on an informal basis, but with the underlying objective of testing the understanding of the project that I had gained from the review of documentation. In doing so, some issues were made clearer and knowledge gaps filled. I also used a strategy of joining staff members during non-working hours as they talked, and just listened to their discussions. I attended various meeting and workshops organised by the staff and from there got a better understanding of some of the issues; and I participated in workshops and meetings organised by MRC. In addition, I visited centres to observe their daily operations and talk to the school management committee members and other stakeholders – such as teachers – to hear their views on the programme. Through all of this, I came to understand the organisation. And the more I understood about the project, the more I appreciated it, and the more

I felt the need to actively participate in it and contribute to its success. This gave me confidence and the feeling of being an insider rather than an outsider. However this was not a very smooth process. At first staff members were suspicious but this situation eased as the days went by and as they came to understand that I was not a threat to their livelihood.

Meanwhile, conflicting viewpoints on the issue of research objectives emerged from different stakeholders. The management expressed the need for the researcher to not only implement a high quality scientific study on impact, but also to work from inside so as to contribute directly to the decision-making process and to empower the staff on research skills. In other words the researcher was expected to operate from the inside so as to fit in the holistic framework of the organisational structure, a structure that is characterised by mutual support and empowerment. It was clear as well that the management wanted the researcher to include short term studies that would give quick information for decision-making processes. The MRC

has created a strong monitoring and evaluation system which is used for active decision making without going into deeper statistical analysis. It was also felt that the researcher would need to use the existing data and work in such a way that the staff would recognise the data that they had collected. In addition, it was necessary to take into consideration the perspectives of staff as continuous observers, and this also helped to ensure that the researcher was also observed. They were 'observing the observer'. Overall, it was felt that the researcher being an insider would help to establish a suitable environment to reflect on the operational culture of the organisation.

In relation to the definition of the researcher's roles, the reporting structure became an issue. There was a lively debate as to whether the researcher can report objectively while employed by the very organisation whose project is being researched. There was also the issue of balancing the carrying out of the study itself – which required a lot of time – and the capacity building that was required

from the researcher as an insider. Equally, the management-oriented school of thought accepted that objective reporting was crucial, but also stressed that useable information was crucial for decision-making in the organisation. It argued that research should be integrated into, and function within, the framework of the institution and its three complementary dimensions. But, at the same time, it accepted that the research programme needed autonomy in terms of objective reporting and the need to focus on programme impact. One outcome of this was that the administrative reporting lines had to be redefined.

The core question for me as the researcher was whether I could be objective enough in reporting my findings if I was working as an insider in the very project whose impact I was assessing. It was essentially a debate between the technocratic view of ensuring objective reporting and the policy makers' need to maximise the utility of the researcher. It was clear that the debate hinged on the objectives of the research, as seen by the various stakeholders. There was the underlying issue of the reporting line, and also that of the ownership of the project. Whose interests is the researcher serving? Is it the administration, the staff, the financiers or the community? How could the researcher serve the interests of all stakeholders? The defining variables of the placement of the researcher were therefore outside the research design and implementation process. At the end of all these debates, it was agreed that the research should be understood as being by an *objective insider.*

Another significant aspect of the whole scenario was the relationship of the funding agency with the implementation of the project. While the administration saw a clear demarcation between the functions of the funding agency and the implementers, the closeness of the funding agency to the programme left it ambivalent about the outsider and insider perspective. This was an interesting phenomenon, because the distance between the funding agency and the implementation process can dictate the agency's stand in the insider/outsider debate.

Uganda: *A community development officer visits a nursery school*
photo: Jean-Luc Ray / Aga Khan Foundation ©

Lessons learned

These reflections are based on my own experiences in moving from a research philosophy based around 'working on' to one based on 'working with'. I feel that, with the decision that my research should take an objective insider perspective, my mandate expanded to include relatively short term and inherently crucial studies such as the Effectiveness Initiative, and also service roles. There are also indications that staff members appreciate the research programme and that I am no longer perceived as a threat. This can be deduced from consultations. It can also be deduced from the fact that staff have requested me to assist in developing a management information system; building staff capacity in monitoring, evaluation and research capacity; and supporting staff in revising monitoring and evaluation tools. I have also been involved in the task of defining the operational models of the project.

My own belief is that research should be seen as an integral part of the development processes of a project. Contributing to these requires an in-depth knowledge of the project, and it may take time to really understand the principles and operations of a project. Researchers who are insiders are better able to do this than are outsiders.

Social relationships with the staff and other actors, beneficiaries and/or stakeholders are also important. Talking with them and being open to them, as well as explaining your mission to them, creates a friendly relationship which, in turn, creates confidence and lessens any suspicion. It is important to remember that the beneficiaries, including the staff in the organisation, could easily view a researcher as an 'auditor' – and auditors are perceived as working on the principle of 'everything is wrong until proved not to be so'. So suspicions could arise and these could hamper the acquisition of adequate quality data. Creating rapport induces positive participation by stakeholders and facilitates access to information.

Overall, while there is no doubt that the methodology must be of scientific quality, well justified quantitatively and objective, and must produce validated results, the decision to hire a researcher as an outsider or insider rests on factors beyond the given of scientific rigour.

These include such utilitarian factors as the objective of the research, the availability of funds, and the extent to which the research objective demands collaboration with the staff. In addition – and perhaps more important – the operational principles and the philosophy of the institution may call for placing the researcher as an insider in order to maximise his/her institutional utility, and to ensure that the outcomes of the research are of maximum benefit because they have been generated by/with a researcher who is considered 'one of the team'.

In the case of my placement as an objective insider with MRC, it was a matter of 'give and take' and of receiving through giving: that was right in this situation. From the stakeholders' point of view, the question that lingers is 'What are we getting in return for what we are putting in?' In the context of the EI, what is being put in is considerable given the profound and searching nature of the EI, its approaches and its tools. ❍

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Acompañamiento:
an emerging map of effectiveness

Ellen M Ilfeld

The article that starts on page 6 discusses how the processes of the Effectiveness Initiative (EI) are revealing what can be significant in influencing project effectiveness, and lists and discusses a number of these factors. This article discusses one way in which large quantities of this kind of material can be organised and worked with so that lessons can be drawn.

Acompañamiento is a word used by the Latin American teams within the EI to refer to a new paradigm of partnership. By acompañamiento we mean the collective construction and sharing of values, principles, visions, methods, burdens and responsibilities. Accompaniment (our English adaptation of the term as we use it), can exist in the many relationships all along the 'aid system', between donors and their partners, between NGOs and the community they serve, between community workers and the children, parents, and community members they work with.

The word itself is rich and evocative, having many meanings that all coalesce to describe the kinds of relationships that EI team members have seen as effective or contributing to the effectiveness of their particular programme. It is interesting to note that in English, accompaniment doesn't really catch the richer, more human meaning of the Spanish original: the Random House Dictionary (1973) defines it as … 'a portion of the musical text designed to serve as background and support for more important parts'.

Even with this more modest meaning, it still represents what is emerging from the data as the essence of an effective stance or attitude that is appropriate for funders, sponsoring NGOs, programme staff, and community animadoras as they relate to the communities they wish to accompany.

An initial set of over 500 themes that illuminate (and gave rise to) the concept of acompañamiento emerged from the analysis of cross-site discussions that have been held in the EI, and from related materials. To cope with the mass of materials, a tool called 'Atlas-ti' has been used. This is a software programme that allows the user to organise complex qualitative data and assign code words to portions of text. The software also offers a graphical mapping tool, to make it easier to identify and make sense of relationships between the themes that emerge, allowing them to be grouped into 'families'.

On the following page, we present an example of this mapping, titled 'The Accompaniment Families Map'. It shows the grouping of code families that together represent the concept of accompaniment. Each item on this first map you see is actually the name of a code family, containing between 6 and 60 themes. Thus, the Accompaniment Families Map in its entirety is made up of 24 sub-families. Because of space limitations, we are only able to explore one sub-family here.

Reading the themes within this family makes it possible to get an intuitive sense of the types of issues that each family contains. However, it is important to remember that each theme is drawn from the original data, and is linked to one or several quotations from the cross-site texts that reside in the Atlas-ti database. Thus, once the map has been challenged and refined, the resulting family maps can be written up into *living documents,* discussing the themes in reference to the data, context, and source from which they were derived.

In this way, what we are learning about acompañamiento will be shown in all its dimensions, and can be more deeply and broadly understood. ○

The Accompaniment Families Map

WHOSE AGENDA

LEARNING ORGANISATION...

VALUES, PHILOSOPHY

ROLE OF DONORS...

PARTNERSHIP...

COMMUNITY...

ATTITUDES, STANCES

ECONOMIC DEMANDS

BRIDGES

CULTURE...

CHANGING REALITIES, POLITICS

PEOPLE AT CENTER...

COMMUNICATION...
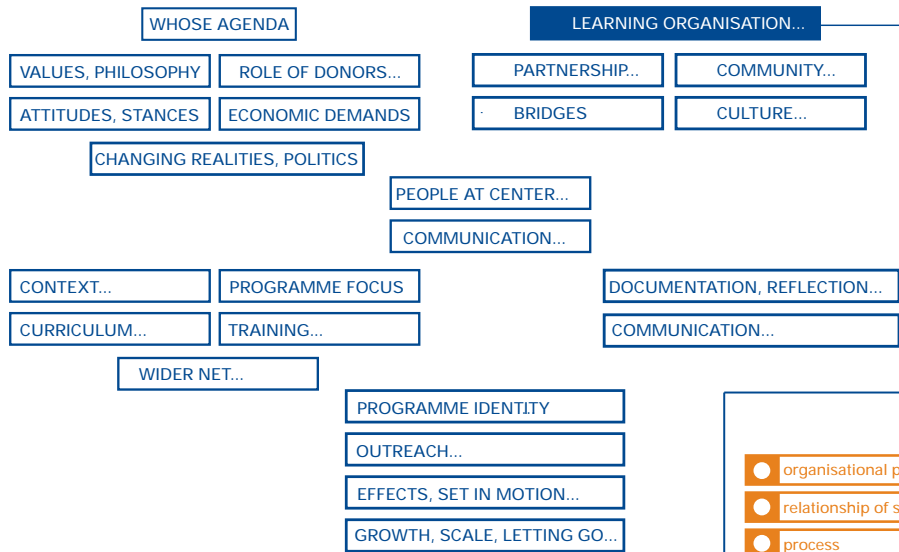
The Code Family "Learning organisation"
This example shows how each code family can contain as many as sixty themes.

CONTEXT...

PROGRAMME FOCUS

DOCUMENTATION, REFLECTION...

CURRICULUM...

TRAINING...

COMMUNICATION...

WIDER NET...

PROGRAMME IDENTITY

OUTREACH...

EFFECTS, SET IN MOTION...

GROWTH, SCALE, LETTING GO...

F CF: ACCOMPANIMENT: LEARNING ORGANIZATION

organisational process	learning organisation	operational framework
relationship of systems	learning	management system
process	planning vs serendipity	management style
dynamic process	organisational learning	management
innovation	learning (from errors)	adequate supervision
connections	learning put to action	board, governance
strategic moves	organisational growth, change	
conscious	trial and error	

organisational culture

org. self-awareness

organisational soul

organisations as families

working conditions

style of working

physical environment

timing   flow pattern

resiliency

institutional resiliency

change

transformation

transitions   how programme works

critical events   structure

change points   components of programme

how were we before...   alternative delivery systems

turning point   phases of programme

change in personnel   institutionalisation

renewal   strength of programme

Peru: child playing with a car made of recycled materials while his parents take part in a workshop
photo: Servios Urbanos para Mujeres de Bajos Ingresos (SUMBI)

Bernard van Leer ⬤ Foundation

Investing in the development of young children

The Bernard van Leer Foundation is a private foundation based in The Netherlands. It operates internationally.

The Foundation aims to enhance opportunities for children 0-7 years growing up in circumstances of social and economic disadvantage, with the objective of developing their potential to the greatest extent possible. The Foundation concentrates on children 0-7 years because research findings have demonstrated that interventions in the early years of childhood are most effective in yielding lasting benefits to children and society.

The Foundation accomplishes its objective through two interconnected strategies:
– a grant-making programme in selected countries aimed at developing culturally and contextually appropriate approaches to early childhood care and development; and
– the sharing of knowledge and know-how in the domain of early childhood development that primarily draws on the experiences generated by the projects that the Foundation supports, with the aim of informing and influencing policy and practice.

The Foundation currently supports a total of approximately 150 projects in 40 selected countries worldwide, both developing and industrialised. Projects are implemented by project partner organisations that may be governmental or non governmental. The lessons learned as well as the knowledge and know-how in the domain of early childhood development, which are generated through these projects, are shared through a publications programme.

The Foundation was established in 1949. Its income is derived from the bequest of Bernard van Leer, a Dutch industrialist and philanthropist, who lived from 1883 to 1958.