

SUMMARY:

TYPES OF GRASSROOTS PARTNERSHIPS

**Grassroots Women's International Academy
Barcelona Spain 2004**

Community Building Partnerships

- **Re-Building Community After War**

In 1995, after the Siege of Sarjevo, the communal life of the city had to be reconstructed. The Redo Mother Centre, drawing from models created by a large network of Mother Centres in Middle and Eastern Europe, created a public living room for women, children and families to exchange experiences and develop projects for the benefit of their community. The local authorities, who had "no budget for NGOs" partnered with moral support.

- **Community Building in a Hostile Environment**

The Garifuna, an Afro-Caribbean people of Honduras, have long been a victim, if not a specific target for unscrupulous government and business people. Hurricane Mitch added insult to chronic injury. The community, however, found regeneration in re-construction. Supported by a wide web of partners from outside the country, the Comité de Emergencia de Garifuna have rebuilt schools, generated handicraft production, established a market, begun an environmentally sensitive, diversified planting program, reforested depleted areas, started schools and lunch programs for children.

- **Slum-dwellers to Citizens of Nepal**

Once the women's slum dwellers of Nepal were organized, had savings and credit groups formed, and Mahila Ekta Samaj established, the NGO LUMANTI supported them in linking with the community federation, ward committees, local government, mayor as well as in attracting funds from Katmandu Municipal Corporation (KMC), ACHR, SDI, Action Aid and Water Aid. Achieving an major goal of grassroots mobilization, one grassroots woman now sits on the KMC board.

- **New Relationships**

The Mother Center in Prague opened in 2002 and, among other activities, ran one of the original local-to local pilot projects and succeeded in getting a park built for the city's children. Since then it has worked with the Healthy Town project, which led to reconstruction of curbs for the ease of use by the disabled; better cooperation among the social services, and a system of rewards for restaurants which are child friendly. Civic windfalls are new friendships between local authorities and citizens.

- **Mature Broad-based, Multi-stakeholder Network of Partners, Allies, & Friends**

DAMPA is a grassroots people's organization with 59 member organizations with 17, 774 families for 106,644 individuals. It has Fifty nine (59) member organizations in Metro Manila in the National Capital Region, as well as in Regions 3 and 4 in the island of Luzon and was registered with the Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission in June 28, 1996. In order to achieve its complex set of objectives - issue-based community organizing, self help initiatives, policy advocacy, networking and alliance building, participation in local governance, maximization of government programs, and capacity building and training - it has developed a wide network of allies, locally nationally and internationally.

Physical Infrastructure Partnerships

- **Community Owned &/or Managed Infrastructure**

Abandoned toilet buildings became the site for hideouts, drug sales, muggings and rapes in the Mathare slum of Nairobi. After a considerable effort, GROOTS Kenya women were able to attract Local authorities to meet 120 of them in the settlement. Working with the

minister of lands, and with financing from local authorities, communities have taken over management of the toilets and have developed plans for a health center, street lights, and a marketplace.

- **Building an Intergenerational Centre**

The Mother Centre of Stuttgart had been advocating for the city to provide them with space. This drive finally led them into a partnership initiated by the Rudolph Foundation which ultimately included 5 city departments and 4 user groups. The process, full of instructive experience on all sides, nevertheless resulted in a city-owned multigenerational house.

- **Rebuilding Slums**

- In Greater Lima, Peru, the men and women of two slum areas partnered with the city in the demolition, planning, design and earthquake-resistant construction of their communities- literally from the brick-making upwards. . Current communities include health centers, roads, footpaths, and places for children to play

- **Rebuilding Poor Communities**

In Bangkok Thailand, the Thai Environmental Initiative, a government sponsored NGO, empowered communities to improve their neighborhoods, rebuild houses, and start new businesses. The private sector donated trees, and the government has provided health and learning centers.

- **A Dignified Space for Aboriginal People**

While the Aboriginal Indians of Canada of today are strengthening their communities and families, they must contend with the results of past oppression. The Aboriginal Mother Centre of Vancouver Canada, in partnership with both Federal and Provincial government, now offers meals to homeless Aboriginals, runs a knitting factory, and offers day care.

Economic Development Partnerships

- **Acquiring a marketplace**

In Addis Ababa, an organization for urban Women in Self Employment (WISE) work with legally registered cooperatives. The foundation work includes organizing, training, financing savings and credit schemes and market shed, as well as networking and diplomacy. The women of Mizan Cooperative, had selected a site with competitive advantage for their marketplace. their persistence, organization, knowledge of the rights joined with the negotiating support of WISE to win them title from the local government authorities.

- **African Women in the Construction Business**

At the core of the Zimbabwe Women in Construction Association are, not surprisingly, women learning and practicing construction trades. What makes the Association interesting from a partnership program is that ITDG, the founding partner, has built trade “linkages” into the program from the beginning, thus setting the women up not just with skills but with a business environment. Its has partnerships with the Ministry of Gender Youth and Employment, the Ministry of Local Government, Public works and National Housing; participation in Business Development Service Providers’ Expo, Small Enterprise Development Company; and solid connections with local authorities and the media.

- **Economic and Community Development**

SEA, a relatively young Jesuit run organization, offers small loans, community empowerment programming, and business planning for poor people of Santa Anita, Peru. In addition they actively create alliances between NGOs and local authorities.

- **Residents video slum-life issues**

To empower slum dwellers to address the persistent problems in Nairobi's informal settlements, the *Women's Information and Communications Technology Project* provided participatory planning, community consultations, training and dialogue with local authorities. The film's success produced relationships with the Nairobi Informal Settlements Coordination Committee, the National Broadcasting Agency, and Barclays Bank.

AIDS Partnerships

- **Knowledge chain**

The Rwanda Women's Network, which is financed by the Rwandan government, is a multifaceted program to promote the socio-economic welfare of women, including health care for. Included among many sophisticated program, networking and peer are supported as means to communicate information and moral support to all levels of society.

- **Networks of Care**

With the leadership and support of a networking structure created by GROOTS Kenya, grassroots women have learned to care for those with HIV/AIDS in their own communities. They continue to meet to give one another support and new information. GROOTS has also recruited research partners from a local university to document the results of their work and has been asked to run health centers in town. A major financial partner is Cordaid. (See global partnerships below)

Political Collaborations

- **Passing an anti-domestic violence ordinance**

Bantay Banay, an NGO that provides counseling, litigation and referral services to battered women in Cebu City, Philippines provided the data, expertise (gender-sensitive responses to domestic violence), and the organized, voting constituency that made it possible for a politically compatible city councilor, Gerardo Carillo, to pass the legislations which led to a local ordinance prohibiting domestic violence; training of police, lawyers, and barangai captains; and NGO monitoring of new anti-domestic violence practices and procedures.

- **Passing a Gender Budgeting Ordinance:**

In the Philippines, at least 5% of development assistance packages are assigned to women; in reality, however, the percentage was not met. Working with Councilor Benedicto of Caloocan, who drafted a gender budgeting ordinance to force compliance, the Grassroots Women's Empowerment Center (GWEC) worked the political front lines - carrying placards in the street to show that they would vote for politicians who supported the ordinance.

Global Partnerships*

- **SlumDwellers Empowerment**

By empowering groups of slum dwellers around the world, Slum Dwellers International has become a global force. According to the Ford Foundation, Slum/Shack Dwellers International is "a network of squatter groups on three continents, [which] grew out of an alliance formed in the mid-1980's by three Indian organizations. In 2000, slum dwellers in Kurumu, Kenya joined the network, created savings and credit groups and now have "the voice and the power" to acquire land tenure for 5 slums and two in Nairobi.

- **Improving the Lives of Women in Cities**

Among its interests, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is looking for greater representation of women in local government, with special emphasis on achieving the MDGs. Describing partnership as a "mutual investment", it with the Huairou Commission for its experience with local-to local dialogues, its access to organizations with the

experience and capacity to work on issues such as poverty, lack of financial independence, exhaustive roles of private household work and civil responsibilities, alienation from the party system, limited leadership training and outright discrimination. For its part, Huairou seeks an enlargement of opportunities for grassroots women to participate in local governance.

- **Empowerment as a Development Approach**

- CORDAIDⁱ, a Dutch donor agency, believes “Everyone has the right to a decent human life without poverty. This also applies to people living with AIDS, slum dwellers, and street vendors.” Working in more than 40 countries in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and in the Netherlands, Cordaid works through cooperation with local organizations. Grassroots groups are a special interest because of their “interesting initiatives.” Because of the commonality of their mission and values, Cordaid and Huairou have been natural partners.

*Huairou is honored to have longstanding partnerships with UN-HABITAT and AFRUS-AIDS as well as a newer, very productive one with American Jewish World Service. These partnerships were not featured at the Grassroots Academy and so are not reported on here.

ⁱ Anna Schilizzi, CORDAID, GWIA, Barcelona, 2004.