



Fundación Rural Development Consult

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Message from the Staff

CDR has now been active for two decades in Central and South America and the Caribbean. Since the Foundation started operations in 1989, an estimated total of 432 projects have been carried out in the field of economic and social development. The work of the Foundation has been gradually broadened from the rural sector, to studies on productive and financial development, in rural as well as urban areas. They comprise economic assessments of highly diverse sectors, which deal with sustainability in terms of entrepreneurship, environment, social and institutional matters, including natural and human resource management, gender, organisational strengthening and improving trade lines of natural products. Development of markets for the provision of services in chains of production, finance and commercialisation has become a core area.

The permanent team of five consultant-researchers has gradually become involved in an area much larger than the Isthmus of Central America. Countries in the Andes and the Caribbean have become integrated into the team's work arena. The analysis has been evolving from a mono-sector focus toward an approach where various sectors are involved. Activities show an ever closer conjunction between local development and economic and social trends at the global level. As a result, a wide array of institutional actors and practitioners are serviced, often in recurrent interaction with the permanent staff. We are therefore satisfied to be able to share the results summarised in this report with numerous readers via CD-ROM or through the downloadable version on the updated website at www.cdr.or.cr.

Much remains to be done in the field of applied development research in the western hemisphere. CDR's challenge is to strike a balance between consultancy assignments and academic research in a geographic area spanning from Ecuador to Guatemala, the Dominican Republic and the Netherlands Antilles. Beyond the eight books that have now been published on themes such as rural finance, sustainable agriculture and neo-institutional economics, other works were published in areas of rural micro-enterprise and tourism. More than twenty-five undergraduates, with support from CDR, conducted student research in the region;

others will be offered fresh opportunities. The Foundation has nourished lasting working relationships with twenty post-graduate specialists, most of them operating in networks throughout the region.

The Foundation strives to remain independent of special interests, from donor agencies to recipient countries and institutions. This has been proven to contribute to the quality of research findings and policy advice. Research and advice converge because setting the right institutional environment is the key to success in developmental efforts. Individuals and groups will perform better when proper incentives, not necessarily of a material nature, are in place. The road to development *cum* equity is paved with transparency, accountability and concerted feedback mechanisms. Financial and sector markets, beyond the supply of public goods and services, will not function well where strong tendencies prevail toward state or group dominance. The challenge is to bring about a mix of parallel participation, shared rules of the game, and collective and individual responsibility as a joint response to the pressing problems of the region.

After two decades of service, CDR remains committed to continue offering a balanced array of think-and-do services in the coming years. Its location, experience and multi-disciplinary approach, if not a guarantee of future endeavours, do constitute an enabling basis for serving the public interest through analytical and educational means. There is a lasting need to support private and public intervention with insights based on field research and professional autonomy. They mark our operational agenda, on the road to an equitable and fair development process.



Introduction

Rural Development Consultant (CDR) is an international foundation, established in 1989 in Amsterdam (The Netherlands) by the Vrije Universiteit. Since the beginning, it has been operating from San José, Costa Rica, as the base for all its work in Central America. In addition, it carries out research and advisory work in Caribbean and South American countries. CDR maintains close collaboration with several research institutes, including the universities of Antwerp, Rotterdam and Wageningen, as well as the centre for Latin American Research and Documentation (CEDLA) at the University of Amsterdam. Synergies with Central American research institutions are actively sought.

The framework of CDR's consulting services is based on extensive applied research, which combines micro-level studies with sector and macroeconomic analyses. CDR is aware of the importance of small and medium-size rural producers in the region, and the need to achieve integral and sustainable development. The Foundation is also convinced that providing institutions with a sound environment that includes proper incentives and stability for producers is essential. CDR's work on the design and effects of producer policies and sector programs is based on careful empirical analysis of production systems and local organisations.

Over the last decennium, CDR's work has been mainly focused on:

- ✓ Research in **rural production chains** and commercialisation systems;
- ✓ Assessment of policies on **financial services** tailored to the needs of, in particular, small and micro-enterprises;
- ✓ Monitoring of **sustainable development** programmes in a setting of south-south cooperation;
- ✓ Research on **social performance management**, the impact of financial services to populations at the poverty level and their social autonomy;
- ✓ Guidance on policies and **sector programmes** for regional and local development.

Over the years, there has been keen interest and capacity built to address gender aspects in development. These are reflected in critical contributions to the development of a market for services that facilitate economic and

social development throughout the region.

The present strength of the Foundation lies in the depth, specificity and flexibility in the assignments commissioned by bi- and multilateral institutions. The work is meant to alleviate concerns on the scope and effect of development policies, through advisory and analytical methods. The aim is to create additional capacity on the side of target groups and agencies alike.



Rural market in Ecuador.

The Environment

Central American countries have small open economies, with 52 per cent of the total population living in rural areas. After more than a decade of great political unrest, a period of peace consolidation began in the 1990s, with more open decision-making processes, greater participation of civil society, market deregulation, and removal of external trade barriers. In most countries, government budget deficits are being controlled, allowing for a steady reduction of inflation rates. The year 2008 showed a sharp increase in inflation levels throughout the Central American region, with the average rising to 9.6 percent, up from 8.5 percent in 2007. In particular, Belize, Costa Rica and Honduras faced increases in price index levels of more than two percentage points, bringing inflation close to or above ten percent per annum.

All economies grew during the year, especially in Panama where gross national product expanded by 9.2 per cent. This was reflected in per capita income (in US dollars for the year 2000), where Panama (USD 5,594) has now overtaken Costa Rica (USD 5,166), followed by Belize (USD 4,135). Guatemala and Honduras remain at a distance with per capita incomes of USD 1,679 and USD 1,445, respectively. Nicaragua, the second poorest country in the hemisphere, saw its income per capita in 2008 stagnating at USD 900. Other than Costa Rica and Panama, remittances in Central America received from migrant workers still represent significant parts of national income.

The Isthmus is, since the 1990s, in a process of integration into international markets, albeit with differences in pace and extent. Virtually all countries showed increasing indices of trade volumes in relation to their national income. However, concomitant disequilibria have emerged in the external sectors of all countries: deficits in current accounts are large and increasing, at least as shown from figures available over 2007 and 2008. Whereas deficits stood at 4.6 percent of GNP in El Salvador and Guatemala, they were between seven and twelve percent in the cases of Belize, Costa Rica, Panama and Honduras. Nicaragua's deficit on the current account went up from 18.3 per cent of GNP to a record level of 25.8 per cent.

The surge in current account deficits is, in retrospect, to be viewed in the context of the conclusion of regional free trade agreements. By the end

of 2008, the agreement reached between Central American, Dominican Republic and US governments had been ratified by all national legislative bodies. With the exception of Guatemala, Central American deficits have worsened in the aftermath of DR-CAFTA's coming into force, contrary to the prediction of public and private actors who had spoken out in favour of CAFTA.

By the end of 2008, a new round of negotiations was scheduled for an Association Agreement to be established between the European Union and the Central American Republics (excluding Belize). This agreement would have a wider scope than trade and investment movement, as it was also aimed at the participation of civil society in policy decision making, environmental protection mechanisms and a programme for technical cooperation for the next half decade. Key issues would include the opening up of Central American markets for services, the import levies charged by the EU for a small but significant segment of fresh produce, and – what proved to be cause for suspending the negotiations altogether in the first trimester of 2009 – the volume and use of reimbursable funds for productive sectors.

The productive sectors of the Central American economy will, with or without agreement with the EU, merit close scrutiny in the coming years. The most vulnerable segments have the most at stake when it comes to the economic opening of national borders. Whether or not local rural producers are sufficiently prepared to compete with more productive overseas competitors, the latter in many cases subsidised by their respective governments, will be an issue for further research. To what extent the rural sector is able to fulfil other functions beyond the production of commodities is an equally important research issue.

A second issue for new research regards the behavioural trends of producers and consumers in the face of environmental change, including the impact of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions on a global scale. Until the present, the involvement of CDR has been centred on monitoring impulses to the tourism and energy sectors, together with community participation and gender equity, with a view to production sustainability in the long run. The effects of alliances, occasionally brokered by NGOs, between local producers and transnational companies, need to be critically assessed. Effects on income distribution patterns, use of scarce natural resources and health hazards stemming from processing primary products may undercut the advantages of these alliances. In general, the threats to the equilibrium of ecosystems justify a review of research efforts and present policymaking, from a cross-border perspective.

A third area for further study relates to strategies for enterprise development, which would have to respond to challenges in the surrounding context. This applies to both the urban and the rural sector, where innovation capacity and adjustment are intricately linked to external services. The market strengthening for organic produce is an example where a gamut of measures may be adopted, such as innovation and more efficiency within the farms, the organisation of farmers into competitive market niches, as well as the overhaul of production systems aimed at quality improvement in an eco-friendly setting. A similar approach is considered in other sectors; small and micro-entrepreneurs do respond favourably to business development services, provided that they enhance internal efficiency and adopt associative producer schemes, while involving stimuli for new product-market combinations.

A fourth area for research and advice is related to the domain of human development, where public and private initiatives converge in the objective to improve facilities in remote rural areas. One angle is provided by the analysis of public investment in education, health care and cultural facilities with the help of external donors, which is often linked to programmes for food security. A second approach is offered by specialised organisations through stand-alone facilities in public health areas to ethnic minority groups. With the expertise available in community development and public institution building, CDR may assist in the assessment of what works best in grassroots health care programmes. Optimisation of these efforts is more likely to be successful by letting factors interact through public action, but also demand-driven household and market forces.

Box 1: Impact of the financial crisis in Central America

Until early 2009, the impact of the financial crisis that shook the Western economies was not perceived as devastating in Central America. In accordance with the IMF growth estimates of late April 2009, countries could be distinguished where growth of gross national product would be either negative, in some cases dropping more than five percent points, or modestly positive. Larger economies (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico) as well as oil exporting countries (Ecuador, Venezuela) are in the first category. They will be severely hurt by decreased demand for primary and industrial products, particularly from the United States.

Most Central American countries, with less exposure in their external sector, are expected to be in the second category and to feel less pain. But Panama, with a fifth of its national product and workforce related to the Canal, would see its growth rate reduced from nine to three per cent.

Table 1: Change in Real Gross Domestic Product

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Belize	1.2	6.0	1.0	2.0
Costa Rica	7.3	3.3	0.5	1.5
El Salvador	4.7	3.0	0	0.5
Guatemala	5.7	3.3	1.0	1.8
Honduras	6.3	3.8	1.5	1.9
Nicaragua	3.8	3.0	0.5	1.0
Panama	11.5	9.2	3.0	4.0

Source: IMF, World Economic Outlook (April 2009)

Even if the fallout of the crisis to the Isthmus is weaker than in larger countries, in itself this does not indicate that lower income strata will not be hit. Admittedly, economic growth in recent years has not improved the welfare of the region's poor. They still represent half of the population in Guatemala and El Salvador, and even two-thirds in Honduras and Nicaragua. Only Costa Rica (one-fifth) and Belize and Panama (one-third) count poor families to a relatively lesser extent. In the way they did not benefit from economic growth in recent years – in fact, inequality rose in countries with higher growth – they would not now necessarily suffer from the recession.

However, there are good reasons for adopting a cautious view regarding the effects of the crisis on poor households. Ten mechanisms may well give rise to hardships in the growth of lower income households, through direct or indirect channels:

- **Effect of population growth:** For the first time in years, growth of real GDP will be lower than population growth in the poorer core countries of the Isthmus, in particular in Nicaragua. Per capita incomes in Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua are bound to fall. The poorer countries have higher population growth and it is their per capita incomes that are set to shrink.
- **Remittances effect:** Remittances are forecast to fall throughout Latin America, on average, by 7 percent. Less significant to Costa Rica and Panama, the other countries will be more vulnerable to the drop in remittances. Poor households often receive remittances for durable assets, health and education. Their prospect of building long-term assets will be affected.
- **Hire and fire labour markets:** Specific service sectors such as transport, tourism and others with higher percentages of less skilled migrants (as in Costa Rica and Panama) show evidence of decreasing demand, with consequences for employees without fixed contracts, if any at all. Sectors that are more vulnerable to the downturn tend to be show less clemency when dealing with labour redundancies.

- **Reduction of external funds:** The stream of liquid resources for credit programmes has started to decline. Although this may have been preceded by donor considerations, at the end of the day loan funds to small entrepreneurs incur the risk of drying up due to cuts in donor programmes.
- **Loan collection and credit crunch:** Throughout the Isthmus, non-bank intermediaries are reportedly reacting to the lower level of economic activity by collecting loans more intensely. This not only means higher operational cost, but also less tolerance to customers with a lower capacity to pay back. Poor clients encountering difficulties serving loans will face more obstacles in loan extension or refinancing.
- **Adverse context for savings:** Contrary to the state of microfinance in the Andean Region, Central American countries are ill prepared for a reduction in external sources. In all countries, savings mobilisation by most microfinance intermediaries is illegal. This has contributed to a savings rate in most economies close to 10 % of GNP or lower, instead of 20 % or more. Rural financial sectors are deprived of liquidity rotating between households. Consequently, smaller loan amounts cannot be offered by microfinance intermediaries to poorer households.
- **Reduced scope of options:** The scope of opportunities has narrowed to vulnerable strata throughout the Isthmus, also for environmental reasons. Migration to the cities has meant that many poor families cannot now go back to rural areas, even less so if the soils have been eroded, depleted or sold. Small agriculture and livestock production, once abandoned, are no option for a return. Migration to overseas industrialized countries is even less secure.



Weathering the downturn?

- **Lacking public safety nets:** The levels of social expenditure, publicly financed and related to health, education and social security, vary widely among Central American countries. They range between USD 100 and 200 in Costa Rica and Panama, for all income brackets. But it does not exceed USD 40 in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Lower income will see a drop in household revenues severed by faltering access to public protective facilities.
- **Displacement effect:** A relationship exists between the production of (bio)fuels and food. When the price of Brent oil in international markets was close to USD 40 per barrel, prospects for expanding the production of bio-fuels were poor. In the following months when the oil price per barrel went up to more than USD 60, bio-fuel production regained attractiveness. In the case of extended areas and production on better soils, the bio-fuel sector may start displacing food production, with risks to the food security of 5 million undernourished Central Americans.
- **Reaching the bottom:** Wealthier households feel the crunch of the economic downturn in absolute and relative terms: they may have lost capital, domestic or overseas. But their economic cushion will remain intact, which is not the case with poor households. On a scale of 0 to 100, with 10 as a supposed hardship line, a fall from 90 to 50 is steep. But to fall from 12 to 9 is far more serious. The minimal wealth needed for a poverty-exit strategy is then likely jeopardised.

The above factors will not automatically lead to the economic downturn spilling over to the poor in Central America. Some productive sectors that are less dependent on externally acquired intermediate goods and resources started to flourish several years ago and are likely to withstand the recession. However, the trend towards pro-poor growth that is not harmful to the environment is a long haul from the statement that Central America will be able to withstand the current economic crisis.

In brief, the work of CDR is increasingly organised at distinct levels of economic and institutional development, with a stronger interregional focus between the Andean Region, the Central American Isthmus and the Caribbean. The challenge for 2009 and beyond is to further build on the matrix of issues, levels and sectors, while intertwining research and advisory assignments.

Helped by its physical location, its thematic specialisation and the regional focus of its work, CDR is well positioned to contribute to the above trend. The factors allow for a better stock-taking of current developments, as well as for its advising role in the crafting of public policies and institutional strategies. Due to its role at distinct national and local levels, it may help to keep track of regional developments and seek tentative answers, while steering clear of established national or institutional interests.

Organisation and Staff

During 2008, the Members of the Board of Directors of the CDR Foundation were:

- ✓ Geske Dijkstra (President, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam).
- ✓ Johan Bastiaensen (Member, Senior Lecturer at the Institute for Development Policy and Management at the University of Antwerp).
- ✓ Pitou van Dijck (Secretary, Associate Professor at the Centre for Study and Documentation of Latin America (CEDLA) in Amsterdam);
- ✓ Kees Burger (Treasurer, Associate Professor at the Development Economics Group of Wageningen Agricultural University). He resigned at the end of 2008, leaving the post of Treasurer to Marrit van de Berg, lecturer at the Wageningen Agricultural University.

Due to its small size, CDR maintains an internal organisation with short communication lines. It currently employs five core staff members who mostly reside in San Jose, Costa Rica. Office direction is the responsibility of Hans Nusselder. The other principal researcher-consultants are: Giovanni Beluche Velásquez, Marije van Lidth de Jeude and Ariana Araujo Resentera. The latter two joined the team in 2008, after Michelle Deugd and Alexandra Tuinstra resigned in early and late 2008, respectively. Esther Laureano (general assistant) and Marta Valenzue-



Farewell to a colleague.

la (secretary and accounting officer) continue to provide administrative support. Douglas Sánchez Fieueyan assisted the team in information technology. Maria Elena Guadrón Carrillo gave language training on an individual basis.

Teamwork was complemented by a host of associate consultants contracted in the framework of specific projects. Associate consultants contracted in 2008 included Amilcar Castañeda, Rocío Loria, Carlos Vanderlaat, Iris Villalobos, Koen Voorend and Guillermo Zuñiga.

The main office of CDR in San José was maintained in San Pedro de Montes de Oca, the academic district of the capital. The office provides working space to nine professionals. There is a meeting room for small to medium-size groups, individual offices for staff members, additional space for guest and student researchers and a green patio. It also has the capacity to handle steadily increasing documentation, the latter currently standing at more than 5,000 documents.



Activities during 2008

During the report year, the staff at CDR mainly devoted its attention to the areas of consulting services, training, research activities and participation in various forums. The work was focused on the areas of micro-finance policies and their impact on client living conditions, improvement of markets for agricultural produce, support to institutional development and the planning of specific rural development programmes. The agenda demonstrated an adequate balance of capitalization of previous experience and exploration of new fields of interest.

Consultancy and research services

Development of markets for agricultural produce

The interlinkage of production, international trade and institutional strengthening is a primary area for research and recommendations. Private agencies, from both Europe and the Andean countries, remain committed to a thorough analysis of supported intervention strategies. At the request of the Inter-American Development Bank through its Programme for Micro-Enterprises (FOMIN), a review was made of a large number of interventions in the private sector. This assignment included a review of small projects in several sub-sectors in Central America, with due attention paid to the capacity of small producer units to cater to clients beyond the local area.

Markets in Central America present major bottlenecks to associative trade organisations on the supply side. In some sectors, they represent products which have been exposed to market uncertainties, with considerable price volatility. The case of coffee in Nicaragua is evident: the country is dependent on this sector for approximately one-quarter of its exports. Long-term production planning is impeded by contingencies in both the international and the national context. CDR carried out an evaluation of



Future coffee growers...

a project carried out by PRODECOOP (Nicaragua, Estelí) with the aim of strengthening infrastructure through an effort to renovate individual coffee plantations. This project was indirectly financed by the European Commission.

Trade partners have become even more interdependent in niche markets for organic produce, such as banana exporters in Central and South America and, on the other hand, fair trade importers in Western Europe. In Ecuador, the living conditions of small producers have improved as a result of stable prices offered by fair trade partners overseas. This was the outcome of a multi-country research project commissioned by ICCO-Agrofair (Netherlands) in which CDR participated. However, the sustainability of long-term bonds between individual producers and their exporting association, in the case of Ecuador, is not to be taken for granted. This transpired during another assignment for which CDR was contracted by Agrofair Assistance and Development. Lasting performance of relationships requires strong institutions on both sides.



Managing water and bananas (Ecuador).

The challenge of making small enterprises more resilient and robust was manifest during most of the work on value chains and markets in 2008. In a national context, CDR directed technical support to a solidarity trade network in rural Honduras (Red Comal), offering advice in the preparation of a new business plan for the next four years. In the context of the Caribbean, the strategy for a regional venture was prepared at the request of the Government of the Netherlands Antilles. The initiative to foster the small enterprise sector in eighteen countries and territories, through a joint sponsoring effort, took shape with components for training, networking as well as financing instruments geared towards SME development throughout the Caribbean.

Planning and Evaluation

The planning of rural development programmes in Central America is an ongoing activity of the Foundation. In 2008, three assignments were carried out in this field, bearing on specific issues relevant to the revitalisation of the rural sector. One evaluation, at the request of ICCO (Netherlands), concerned the avenue for information exchange, training, and documentation in a self-sustainable institution. Diversification of sources appears to be the best way forward, as concluded from the evaluation of SIMAS in Nicaragua. On the other hand, precarious conditions in the productive and social sectors of Nicaragua may well warrant continued access to external sources, at least as long as purchasing power in the country is falling short.

In a similar domain of cooperation, the advising role is extended to the role played by private external organisations at the regional or sector level. Belgian NGO's such as VECOMA feature a long track record in both financing and accompanying counterpart organisations. This presumes a balanced selection of sectors, geographic areas and minimum institutional requisites that would apply in a regional programme for a medium-term period. Bolstering the strategy following the organisation's focus on Nicaragua, CDR was in the position to provide tailor-made advice during 2008.

The evaluation of multilateral efforts in the area of food security, also in Nicaragua, is relevant as it is delicate in the context of a sector-wide approach (SWAP). CDR was involved in an EU-sponsored programme targeting poor rural households in the northern part of the country. The capitalisation of poor rural households is a legitimate priority in development processes. The methods for selecting and preparing households, the conditions for benefiting from the programme, and the demarcation between the mandates of public institutions are issues that deserve close attention. The criteria for implementing sector-wide programmes should be verifiable in order to ensure equal access for persons in equal circumstances, in particular as the latter are often critical.

Microfinance policies and their impact

In the course of 2008, sixteen missions were carried out in the field of microfinance relating to advising programmes and microfinance institutions, but also to the measurement of social performance management and economic and social impact. The assignments were commissioned by the following sponsoring sources:

- ✓ European Commission and EU programmes: project 08-02 ⁽¹⁾
- ✓ Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (AE-CID): project 08-11
- ✓ International Fund for Agricultural Development: project 08-09
- ✓ HIVOS (Netherlands): projects 08-03, 08-04, 08-05, 08-15 and 08-23
- ✓ ICCO (Netherlands): projects 08-18 and 08-20
- ✓ Oxfam-Novib and Triple Jump (Netherlands): projects 08-27 and 08-30
- ✓ Agrofair Assistance and Development (AFAD, Netherlands): project 08-10
- ✓ University of Antwerp: project 08-12.

A chief line of operations in the organisation consisted of an analysis of the effect of financial services, brought about in the living standard as well as the social involvement of its end users. Various techniques have been developed to measure quality in the delivery of services that are client and employee friendly, commonly known as Social Performance Management (SPM). Numerous microfinance institutions are successful in conducting credit operations with sufficient profitability and a constant focus on poor strata, while others are suffering from "mission drift." SPM-inspired techniques allow for internal accountability, but also for a constant level of services fostering long-term bonds with the clientele. The area is considered as key to developing sustainable microfinance organisations beyond their net financial worth.

A second line of operations consisted of conducting sector studies at the national level, with a view toward pinpointing the main determinants of financial services in financial and institutional terms. CDR participated in such an exercise in the framework of a country-wide evaluation on the Netherlands Antilles, related to a programme (SESNA) aimed at stimulating small enterprises. The performance, maturity and expansion of financial services offered to the private sector, supposedly articulated with business development services, generated insights into the gap that



Products of a social venture on Curaçao.

¹ Refers to the numbers assigned to individual projects executed in 2008, Annex 2.

still exists between demand and supply of financial services in the small enterprise sector. The sector approach comprises the evaluation of single intermediaries, as external financiers face the choice of which institution best meets the requirements for medium-term funding. In Nicaragua, two microfinance institutions were screened by CDR regarding their potential for channelling external credit resources.

The supranational perspective emerges to the extent that the sector may become globally mature. In that respect, one review was related to the networking institutions with the participation of microfinance institutions and private development agencies. Supported by Oxfam-Novib (Netherlands), the International Network of Alternative Financial Organisations (INAFI) has been able to articulate the international growth of microfinance. With headquarters in Dakar (Senegal), this network has adopted a prominent role in the promotion of pro-poor financial services, such as gender policies and health insurance (in particular in Asia), remittances (Latin America) and penetration in rural areas (Africa). The global coverage of INAFI is conducive to diversification and spill-over between continents. However, checks and balances are as vital to the network as to any other learning institution, with latitude to enhance the communication between stakeholders on different continents.



Networking microfinance (Senegal).

Human development

A field with a solid expansion in the advisory and research agenda of the Foundation is human development, in particular, human resource development. This issue was addressed in the work of 2008 in four different areas. First, in evaluations commissioned by the Inter-American Development Bank and the European Commission, a set of gender indicators were applied with a view to their becoming instrumental in a host of multilateral

projects. This is part of the agency's regional strategy of providing a uniform and solid footing to gender policies throughout the Isthmus.



Gender policy in the village restaurant (Nicaragua)

Second, the integration of young entrepreneurs, with or without an enterprise, into productive and social networks is a crucial factor in the success of nationwide programmes. At the regional level, CDR took part in the evaluation of a programme for labour insertion and vocational training directed at young underemployed people in Central America and the Dominican Republic. Financed and executed by Spanish institutions, the exercise proved useful for international comparisons of policies that foster occupational improvement among marginal youth.

The participation in academic courses and workshops was a third area, in which analytical and programming tools were shared with students in rural economic and social development and regional programming. CDR consultants gave courses, in Costa Rica (CATIE and ICDS) and the Netherlands (CEDLA), on methods of measuring human development, frameworks for rural business promotion and design of micro-enterprise stimulation programmes. Tertiary education is rightly viewed as the most appropriate avenue for crossing theoretical concepts with consultancy practices, and vice versa.

A significant initiative in the domain of integrated rural development – in the positive sense assigned to it decades ago – has taken shape in the agreement between UNICEF Costa Rica and CDR. As a first step in late 2008, a diagnosis was initiated in the area of indigenous development and child health care in border zones of northern and southern Costa Rica. This study is aimed at generating lessons learned and public policy framing in the course of 2009. The relevance of the study is manifest in the monitoring of health and living conditions of indigenous people, as well as the partnerships between development organisations, the state and the civilian population concerned. The process of dialogue, joint planning, monitoring and

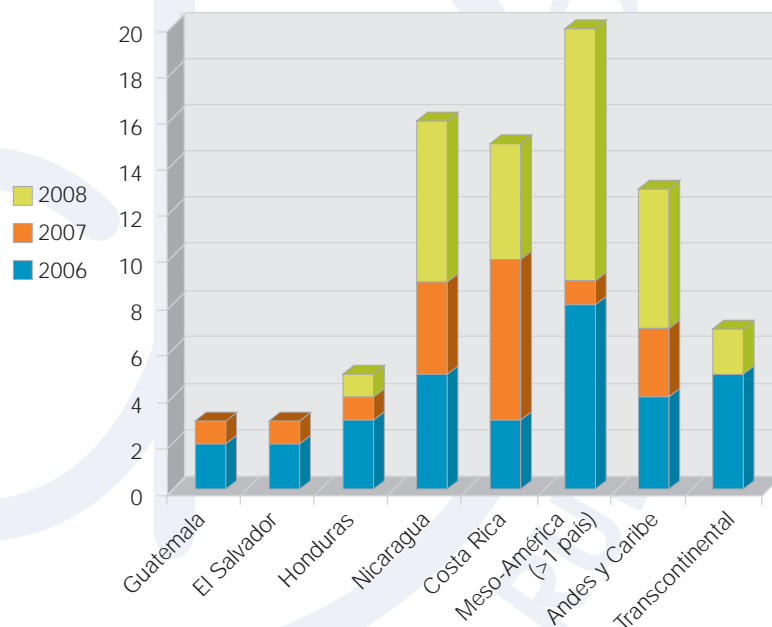
feedback, with the Foundation maintaining its impartiality, is crucial for achieving long-term results.

Much of the work mentioned before requires multidisciplinary teams to be made up of well qualified and amply participating professionals. In 2008, the number of assignments with two or more consultant-researchers from CDR grew to sixteen, representing half of all projects carried out. This underscores the validity of the Foundation's organisational focus, where staff members are stimulated to pool individual specialisations in a common working arena. This cross-fertilisation was fostered by the team members intertwining their principal working areas.

Overview by country and subject

In 2008, CDR was involved in a wide array of research, evaluations and project advisory services. Graph 1 presents the information on a regional basis. The regionalisation of projects has proved to be an ongoing trend: more than projects carried out in a single Central American country, assignments are increasingly requested at regional level and beyond the Isthmus, both in South America, the Caribbean and on a cross-continental basis. The countries Guatemala and El Salvador were served in 2008 through regionally articulated projects. Equally remarkable was the continued interest in CDR services in the host country Costa Rica, where fifteen assignments have been carried out since 2006.

Graph 1: CDR projects according to country and region (2006-2008)



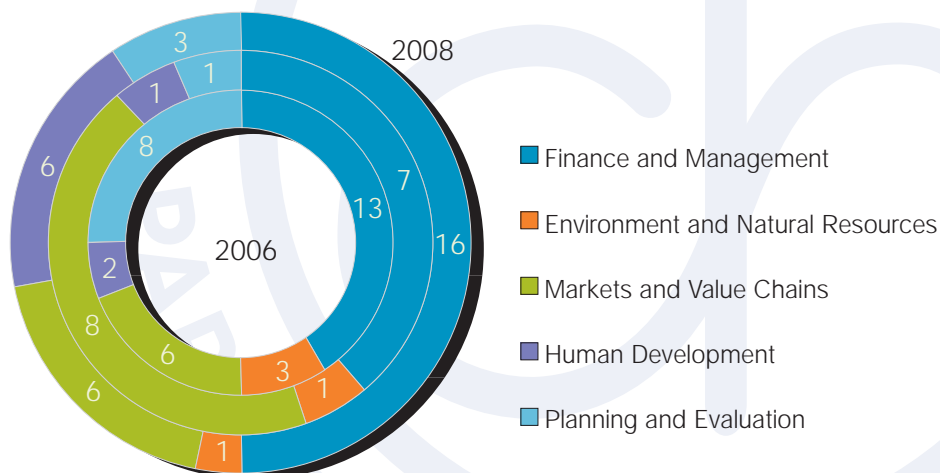
In 2008, there was renewed interest from nationally-based financing sources. Forty percent of the requests originated from the Netherlands, whereas one-third was commissioned by agencies in Spain, Belgium, the United States and the Netherlands Antilles. The remaining quarter of assignments was sponsored by multilateral organisations such as the European Union, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and other specialised agencies of the United Nations (UNICEF).

Concerning areas of interest, there has been a steady evolution in the issues covered by the team (Graph 2). Finance and management remains a dominant field of interest at CDR. It now brings together the assessment of individual intermediaries and advisory services on sector policies including the development of cross-continental networks. Studies on social performance management are now becoming integrated into a field previously filled by credit impact studies only. They now represent a full-fledged part of the agenda and represent a fresh source of knowledge on the workings of the microfinance sector.

Next to the microfinance sector, development of the rural productive sector is an important area of expertise. In particular, the emphasis on value chains and commercialisation through fair trade channels is a field with fast expanding interest of agencies and overseas companies alike. More emphasis is being put on issues of standardisation and organisation on the supply side of these services. Key is the development and application of certification in order to link small enterprises and rural producers to value chains.

Human development represents an expanding field of projects in the Foundation's work. It is partly related to the development of human resources, but it is increasingly integrated with the conditions of indigenous populations in Central America.

Graph 2: CDR projects according to country and region (2006-2008)



Research publications

The work carried out for EU projects in northern Nicaragua had been brought together and was submitted, in 2008, to several sponsoring agencies concerned with rural financial services ("Microfinanzas en la Costa Pacífica Norte").

The interaction between rural and urban development, in a comparative framework between Central and South America, is a topic for attention. The publication "Sustainable cities," with the participation of CDR staff, is scheduled for publication in 2009.

Furthermore, CDR core staff was responsible for a small book dealing with the training of micro-entrepreneurs in the tourism sector. "MIPYMES turísticas" is set for publication in the first half of 2009.

Other academic services

At the end of the year, supervision was started for student field work in collaboration with CEDLA Amsterdam. At the same institute, two guest courses were given at the start and the end of 2008, both focused on the response by small enterprise networks in the context of open economies in Central America and the Caribbean.

At the University of Costa Rica (UCR) in San José, several guest courses were given on the development of agro-tourism and micro-enterprise, as a response to large-scale hotel development on the coast and in the countryside.

In connection to CDR's earlier work, the results of the study on Public Policies and Rural Financial Services (in collaboration with RUTA) were presented at the conference on "Maturing microfinance and the challenge of rural microfinance in Central America," organised by the University of Antwerp in May 2008.

Audit

The financial statements for 2007 were audited and found to be in accord with generally accepted accounting principles. The audit was carried out externally by the audit service of the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam.

Annex 1: Individual consultant-research

Core Staff

Hans Nusselder

MSc. Hans Nusselder (1957) was trained in both economics and non-western sociology at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam. He joined CDR after carrying out research in Southeast Asia and working with several international organisations in Latin America, West Africa and the Netherlands. His areas of specialization include training and institutional support to cooperative producer organisations. Also included are the strengthening of financial structures in Central America and the Caribbean, analysis and policy formulation on micro-enterprise sectors, and the development of international border areas supported by technical cooperation and local institutions. Besides fulfilling the position of office director in San José, he is currently involved in the analysis of the non-bank financial sector development in Latin America and other regions as well as impact studies, agro-commercialisation and development assistance programmes.



Giovanni Beluche Velásquez

MSc. Giovanni Beluche Velásquez (1960), after receiving a B.Sc. in sociology and diplomas in teaching from the University of Panama, obtained his M.Sc. in sociology from the University of Costa Rica, with a specialisation in Politics and Society. Mr. Beluche specialised in the areas of micro-enterprise and employment, the urban informal sector, producer associations, youth and entrepreneurship, microfinance, sustainable tourism, gender and masculinity. Before his involvement with CDR, he had research and teaching experience at universities and educational centres. He provided technical assistance, worked as a project manager and carried out several consultancies with international organisations such as the IADB, OAS, ILO, FLACSO and other public and private entities. His geographic experience covers Mexico, Ecuador, the Caribbean and Central America.



Marije van Lidth de Jeude

MSc. Marije van Lidth de Jeude (1972) has a master's degree in Cultural Anthropology and a Bachelor's degree in Commercial Economy. She has a professional record of more than ten years in rural and urban sector development, in particular with multi- and bilateral donor agencies, governmental institutions, producer cooperatives, small enterprises and other civil society stakeholders. Before joining CDR she worked for organizations like Oxfam - Novib, IFAD - RUTA and A company. Her expertise was established as a program officer and during research and consultancy assignments related to all phases of the project-cycle (from formulation and implementation to evaluation and sustainability). Thematic specialisations include socio-economic vulnerable groups (especially migrants and indigenous people), gender, natural resources, financial, technical and business development services for small and medium-size enterprises, corporate social responsibility and organic agriculture.



Ariana Araujo Resenterra

Msc. Ariana Araujo Resenterra (1981) is an anthropologist from the University of Costa Rica and she obtained her master's degree in Development Studies with a specialization in Local and Regional Development from the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague (ISS). She has ample knowledge and professional experience in the field of local and regional development, natural resource management, gender, agriculture, and in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of projects. Her professional experience also includes the analysis of development policy and programs financed by international cooperation or governments. She has become specialized in action-research processes using participatory methodologies with diverse social groups and organizations in the context of the Central American region.



Associate consultant-researchers

Jan de Groot

Dr. Jan de Groot (1936), agro-economist and co-founder of CDR-ULA at the end of the 1980s, represents the most experienced blend of consultant and research capabilities on rural development in Latin America and the Caribbean. Starting his career in the last phase of Dutch colonial rule, he quickly moved to Latin America, where macro-economic planning gradually intertwined with programme and project assessment and implementation. Holding a Ph.D. degree from the Vrije Universiteit, he combined academic research and technical cooperation assignments, which laid the groundwork for a vast network of expertise and institutional arrangements upon which the Foundation has been relying ever since. After completion of a long-term assignment in the rural sector of western Guatemala, Dr. de Groot is available on occasion for short-term program and sector evaluations.



Stervins Alexis

Dr. Stervins Alexis (1967), a Civil Engineer from the Institut Supérieur Technique d'Haiti, obtained his Ph.D. degree in Global Change and Sustainable Development from the University Alcalá Henares in Madrid. He has fifteen years of experience in formulation, management and monitoring of plans, programmes and projects in regional, local and rural development, social infrastructures, natural resource management and support to organisation building. He specialised in local development processes, natural resource management, risk prevention and management and disaster relief. These areas include assignments in basin and territorial planning, research in tropical ecosystems and assessment of natural and anthropogenic impact. He studied the effects of climate change, pollution and habitat fragmentation in the course of long-term consultancies and research in various Caribbean countries.



José Meléndez

Trained in Economics and Statistics, M.Sc. José Meléndez (1972) is particularly interested in research on the outcome of public policies. His track record includes the analysis of large data bases, econometric modelling, developing and implementing computable general equilibrium models, as well as the adaptation of these models for policy makers and a wider audience. He became recently involved in environmental research on air quality and the mitigation of greenhouse gases in developing countries. He has considerable experience in preparing papers for a non specialised audience, including graphical presentation of research results. He has broad command of econometric computer packages such as STATA, Eviews and programme modelling tools (Matematica and GAMS).



Arie Sanders

Mr. Arie Sanders (1966), an agro-economist from the Wageningen Agricultural University, has had extensive experience with CDR in a blend of applied academic research and programme support and evaluation missions in Central America. His areas of specialization comprise the financial sustainability of rural financial intermediaries, the impact of credit at rural producer household level and intertwining patterns of credit, production and migration in several Central American countries. Mr. Sanders' consultancy experience stretches geographically from the Isthmus, via the Caribbean and the Andes, to the Southern Cone of Latin America, nourished by assignments for a wide array of multilateral organisations. He is currently working at the Zamorano University in Honduras.



Alexandra Tuinstra Gomez

M.Sc. Alexandra Tuinstra Gomez (1982) graduated from the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague (ISS) with a specialisation in Local and Regional Development, where her thesis on environmental policy was awarded and publicised. She has become specialised in institutional strengthening and strategic planning for NGOs and microfinance organisations and their (inter)national networks, project formulation and evaluation, and technical backstopping for the definition of strategies related to agro-industrial



value chains, insertion into local markets, and human rights issues. Her professional experience extends to Central America, as well as Asian, and East and West African countries.

Alejandro Uriza

Lic. Alejandro Uriza (1977) graduated in Agricultural Economics at the National University of Nicaragua (UNAN), subsequently specialising in Marketing and Publicity at the Technological Institute of Monterrey. He has working track record of seven years in various fields such as formulation and evaluation of community projects in rural areas, quantitative and in-depth evaluations at community level, technical assistance and training in change management in NGOs. He worked with Zamorano University in the study on environmental impact of post-Mitch projects of USAID, followed by curriculum development in the field of Integrated Pest Management in Nicaragua. He was country monitoring officer in the Programme Global Food for Education of USDA. He was then communication officer for NicaSalud, involved in community projects of USAID.



Iris Villalobos

Lic. Iris Villalobos (1956), a Business Management graduate from the National University of Costa Rica, has become an advanced specialist in micro-finance training in Central America. For more than 15 years she was closely involved in the development of a number of financial intermediaries in the region, charged either with financial management responsibility, or with external assessment and evaluation assignments. Ms. Villalobos is thoroughly familiar with an array of sophisticated appraisal techniques, and has gained experience with several financial institutions. In the latter, she trained and advised the rank and file during the process of institutional incorporation into the formal financial sector. She has recently been engaged in the formulation of financial business plans, as well as the evaluation of credit components of NGO and multilateral development programs.



Koen Voorend

M.Sc. Koen Voorend (1981) holds a Master's degree in International Economics Studies from the Maastricht University, The Netherlands, and a master's degree in Development Studies with a specialization in Economics of Development from the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague. He has experience in the study of trade and its social and economic impact in developing countries, specifically in Southern Africa and in Central America. Also, he has worked on rural development issues in transition countries, notably in the Caucasus and Central Asia. He holds experience in urban development studies, particularly focusing on informal settlement development, and labour market studies, specifically paid domestic work. Currently, in his position as a researcher at the Institute of Social Research of the University of Costa Rica, he is specializing in the study of welfare regimes, gender, labour markets and the formation and impact of social and economic policies on the one hand, and trade on the other. Also, he is a lecturer at the School of Communication at the University of Costa Rica.



Annex 2: Projects in 2008

08-01 Evaluation of Micro-Credit Program in the North Huetar and Central Pacific region

Costa Rica, February - April, 2008

The FUNDECOCA and FIDERPAC organizations provide training services and micro-credit through communal committees in San Carlos and Puriscal. Given IDB-FOMIN's Social Entrepreneurship Program, they implement programs for geographical expansion and institutional strengthening, with more inclusion of women on the committees. CDR participated in the evaluation whose objective was to generate constructive inputs for the program and improve the management of the initiative.

Alexandra Tuinstra and Michelle Deugd. "Mid-term evaluation of the Program to expand micro-credit services to low income small enterprises of the North Huetar and Central Pacific region, under the Social Entrepreneurship Program of the Inter-American Development Bank": FIDERPAC / FUNDECOCA.

08-02 Evaluation of Small Enterprise Stimulation on the Netherlands Antilles (SESNA)

Netherlands Antilles, January – February 2008

Until the beginning of this decade, small enterprise development in the Dutch Caribbean was subject to policy making on the individual islands. The SESNA project was a significant initiative, aimed at Curaçao, Bonaire, St. Martin, Saba and Statia, with a package of business development and credit supply services. Although the latter fell short of expectations, the lessons learned included the relevance of local BDS suppliers to business and training activities, with built-in accountability in reaching target groups.

Poot, Huib and Hans Nusselder. "Evaluation SESNA. Project sponsored by the Netherlands Antilles Government and the European Commission (ECORYS-Altair)", February-April 2008.

08-03 Improvement of Financial Access for Organic Agriculture

Central America, May 2008

Based on the experience generated by PROAMO (Program for the Support of Organic Markets in Central America and the Caribbean), financed by HIVOS, it was confirmed that there is a need to improve access of small organic producer organizations to financial sources. Therefore, a study was undertaken in Central America to create a regional program to improve financial services for sustainable agriculture.

Michelle Deugd and Giovanni Beluche V. "Project for improving access to financial services for sustainable agriculture".

08-04 Diagnosis and strategy for the development of micro-insurance

Central America, September 2008

The right to health is a basic human right and an unsatisfied need, especially among the most vulnerable people of the world and the region. The study, initiated in 2007 and supported by HIVOS, is based on this fact and on the idea of reducing the vulnerability of the populations with the fewest resources with no access to basic insurance services. The objective is to provide inputs and the necessary recommendations to create a strategy for the implementation of the provision of health micro-insurance services in the region.

Alexandra Tuinstra and Giovanni Beluche. "Diagnosis and strategy for the development of micro-insurance in Central America. HIVOS".

08-05 Social Performance of Microfinance Institutions in Central America

Central America, April - December 2008

The success achieved by Central American intermediaries in financial performance is reflected in diverse international performance indexes, and it is vital in showing the positive social results that many of these institutions are achieving in the improvement of the quality of life of their clients. It is essential to have information that can guide decision making processes in the formulation of strategies that can improve these social results and make them visible to clients, governments and financing agencies.

Marije van Lidth de Jeude. "Social Performance of Microfinance Institutions in Central America. A diagnosis with HIVOS partners".

08-06 Biodiversity Conservation in Coffee, Rainforest Alliance, Central America

Costa Rica, January-April 2008

The BCC Project, undertaken in six Latin American countries in landscapes of major relevance to biodiversity, aims to increase the area of sustainably produced coffee. During these four months the transition period of one of the members of CDR to RFA was begun.

Michelle Deugd

08-07 South-South Cooperation Program Benin, Bhutan, Costa Rica

Costa Rica, January-December, 2008

The South-South Cooperation Program between Benin, Bhutan and Costa Rica, with Dutch financial assistance initiated in 2007, experienced significant growth in its activities in 2008. Numerous bilateral and trilateral projects among the countries started implementation. Representatives from the three countries have gotten together to share knowledge and ideas, resulting in multinational projects focusing on the sustainability of natural resources. At the request of the Royal Netherlands Embassy, CDR continued its monitoring role of this Programme.

Tuinstra, Alexandra. "Progress Updates, Secretariat Programme for South-South Cooperation".

08-08 Added Value to the VECO Program in Costa Rica

July, 2008

The experience and the lessons learned from the five-year program (2003-2007) of VECO Costa Rica has added value to VECO's new intervention model in Mesoamerica. The study had retrospective components, in order to understand the value of the program from the perspective of several actors involved in the process. But it also assumes a prospective focus by having a strategy for ongoing relations between VECO and the organisations based in Costa Rica.

Giovanni Beluche V. "Added value to the VECO Program in Costa Rica and guidelines for a new model for VECOMA". Costa Rica.

08-09 Programme design in Rural Finance Services

Belize, March 2008

The cooperative movement predominates throughout the country, as does poverty in the countryside, particularly the south. The former appears to be well equipped and prepared to take on the latter. This consideration gave shape to a new IFAD initiative aimed at making financial services accessible to poor rural households and stimulating agrarian and other businesses through a novel credit and capital formation scheme.

Hans Nusselder. "Belize Rural Finance Programme, Rural Finance Policy Paper submitted to IFAD". April 2008.

08-10 Professionalisation of Financial Services for Small Banana Producers

Ecuador, April-June 2008

The Association of Small Banana Producers of "El Guabo" was established in 1995, with the objective of organising the agro-artisanal groups for fair trade. Credit for diversified investment for productive improvement has become one of the complementary services of the association. Through technical support to evaluate and professionalise the association's credit services, a plan for financial cooperation was designed.

Tuinstra, Alexandra and Hans Nusselder. "Professionalization of Financial Services of the Association of Small Banana Producers of "El Guabo"[Asociación de Pequeños Productores de Banano "El Guabo"] (APPBG)". AFAD/AgroFair.

08-11 Evaluation of the Microcredit Program of the "Banco de Reservas"

Dominican Republic, June 2008

With resources from the Spanish Cooperation Agency for Development (AECID), the Banco de Reservas of the Dominican Republic implemented a microcredit program directed at microenterprises for commerce, services and manufacture. Since the economic recovery of 2003, which was accompanied by a model of economic aperture and a severe energy crisis, small urban production is facing important challenges that impact the tasks of the bank's team.

Hans Nusselder and Giovanni Beluche V. "Evaluation of the Microcredit Program of the Banco de Reservas."

08-12 Maturing microfinance and the challenge of rural microfinance in Central America

Belgium, May 2008

The document "Políticas Públicas y Servicios Financieros Rurales" (project 06-09) generated interest in rural financial sector policies in the five countries covered by the study. It is understandable that with poverty on the increase in the countryside, policymakers would win on more than one account, when taking note of the approach and the fifteen actions proposed in the document. The document was presented at the above-mentioned conference, organised by the University of Antwerp.

<http://www.ruta.org/admin/biblioteca/documentos/LIBRO%20SFR%20REGIONAL%20FINAL.pdf>

08-13 Impact of Fair Trade

Costa Rica and Peru, January-June 2008

The study analysed the impact of Fair Trade as a channel of commercialization within households, (micro) enterprises, and cooperatives of coffee and banana producers, both organic and conventional. It included analyses at micro and regional levels, especially a comparative analysis between countries, which showed results of the effects of the fair trade model on access to credit by producers and organizational strengthening at local levels. The study also points out some of the challenges for the expansion of Fair Trade.

Zúñiga, Guillermo. "Impact of Fair Trade". CIDIN.

08-14 Communication for Sustainable Rural Development

Nicaragua, July 2008

SIMAS aims to strengthen information and communication management capacities of rural organizations, indigenous groups, NGOs and networks, in order to promote sustainable agricultural and rural development in Nicaragua and Mesoamerica. This mid-term evaluation was intended to (1) measure the achievements regarding the expected results and define the impacts of the work of SIMAS; (2) provide inputs and recommendations for the strategic plan for 2009 – 2013; and (3) recommend a strategy to diversify funds and achieve financial sustainability.

Marije van Lidth de Jeude with Alejandro Uriza. Mid-term evaluation report of SIMAS project "Communication for Sustainable Rural Development." Financed by ICCO, HIVOS and VECO. Nicaragua, July 2008.

08-15 Environmental Performance Management for Micro Financing

Nicaragua, August – September 2008

Awareness is now growing that attention must also be given to the social mission of microfinance intermediaries to improve the quality of life for their clients. This is the rationale of Social Performance Management (SPM) systems. FINDESA (recently transformed into BANEX: *Banco del Exito*) invited CDR to determine the environmental indicators for insertion into the SPM. MFIs can play a vital role in mitigating the negative

environmental impacts of SMEs, as they are the main clients in micro-finance.

Marije van Lidth de Jeude and Ariana Araujo for FINDESA (BANEX). To be continued in 2009.

08-16 Final Evaluation of Organizational and Productive Strengthening

Nicaragua, June-July 2008

For nearly two decades, the coffee-cooperative movement in Nicaragua has been gaining experience with commercial partners in Europe and North America. The evaluated projects implemented by PRODECOOP seek to contribute to the human sustainable development of the most marginalized rural families. The evaluation was focused on the central and cooperative levels, and included a survey of 120 families either associated or not associated with diverse coffee cooperatives.

Hans Nusselder, Ariana Araujo and Guillermo Zúñiga. "Study of change and sustainability. Final Evaluation of the Project for organizational and productive strengthening of 1,856 families of small coffee producers associated with PRODECOOP". Nicaragua. July, 2008.

08-17 Metropolitan planning (PRUGAM), San José

Costa Rica, April 2008

Over the last two years, the company IDOM led the collective preparation of regulatory plans for 31 municipalities of the Greater Metropolitan Area (GAM) of Costa Rica. Most were drawn up entirely and some were adjusted in cooperation with PRUGAM, a programme co-financed by the EU. The planning exercises consisted of three phases, including a territorial diagnosis, selection of alternatives, and validation of the preliminary regulatory plans. The three workshops were attended by representatives from public, private and communal sectors.

Marije van Lidth de Jeude, "Report for IDOM – PRUGAM". June 2007 – July 2008.

08-18 Rural Financial Services in Central America – ICCO

Central America, November 2008

Even though the financial sector plays a crucial role in the development of the Isthmus, its coverage is still insufficient and resources are too scarce to support most of the population. ICCO is seeking to expand access to financial services of the poor rural population of Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, and to identify the actors interested in participating in this program. CDR is facilitating this effort.

Iris Villalobos and Marije van Lidth de Jeude. "Documentation of the field work to define the Alliance between ICCO and CDR in the Program for Rural Financial Services in Central America." November 2008.

08-19 Small and medium enterprise development in the Caribbean

Netherlands Antilles, August – October 2008

Small enterprise development throughout the Caribbean region has been hampered by the high cost of communication, climatic contingen-

cies and mono-sector development (large-scale tourism). Building on previous valuable project experiences, a new Caribbean SME Development Programme will endeavour to enhance capacities of institutions and providers, foster intersectoral linkages, reduce exposure to external shocks and provide avenues for stronger inter-island cooperation. In all, 18 countries and territories are expected to be served in English, French and Dutch-speaking areas.

Hans Nusselder, "Caribbean Small and Medium Enterprise and Intermediary Development Programme (CARISME)", submitted to various donor organisations by government bodies of countries and territories, represented by the Netherlands Antilles Department for Development Cooperation.

08-20 Micro Finances for Organic Cotton

Nicaragua, August 2008

Cotton production in Nicaragua suffered a strong decline in recent decades, given the loss of competitiveness, social tensions and the use of environmentally unfriendly techniques. Recently, some initiatives have arisen to counteract these factors, particularly those of JHC in the management of funds for the production of organic cotton, based on the production chain in local cooperative development. The Cooperative Union, working in the proximity of Ciudad Sandino, is related to the credit fund for organic cotton.

Iris Villalobos and Marije van Lidth de Jeude. "JHC and the management of a fund for organic cotton production. ICCO". August 2008.

08-21 Evaluation of the Program to promote SME associations and competitiveness

Central America, September 2008

The Inter-American Development Bank and the INCAE business school developed a program for SME Competitiveness and Association. This initiative had the objective of improving the competitiveness of small enterprises through the strengthening of alliances within groups and their environment. CDR evaluated 14 of the 20 projects financed in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala.

Giovanni Beluche, Marije Van Lidth de Jeude, Ariana Araujo and Iris Villalobos. "Final Evaluation of the BID-FOMIN/INCAE projects in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala".

08-22 Gender indicators for IFAD-RUTA / PREVAL Programs

Central America, November-December 2008

The guidelines of the IFAD, PREVAL and the PROGENDER Project include gender indicators (of impact, effect and process) for Latin American projects. The current challenge is to include them in the monitoring and evaluation systems of the projects, and to improve the actions and decisions directed to create conditions of gender equity. The methodological support given by CDR is based on a revision and adjustment of the document mentioned below.

Marije van Lidth de Jeude para RUTA, "Indicadores de género: Lineamientos conceptuales y metodológicos para su formulación y utilización por los proyectos FIDA de América Latina y el Caribe".

08-23 Financial Services for Sustainable Agriculture (SEFAS)

Central America, December 2008

There is a growing demand for organic products that is not being fulfilled completely given the producers' lack of access to credit. The services direct towards this sector are scarce and disperse. In general, credit programs are not adequate for the characteristics of the organic agriculture sector. There are weaknesses on the financial sector side in terms of their supply, and there are difficulties on the producer side in qualifying for certain credits. Therefore CDR, in alliance with HIVOS, created a program to bring these two sectors closer together.

Giovanni Beluche V. "Program Strategy for SEFAS". Central America.

08-24 Mid-Term Evaluation for labour insertion of under-privileged groups

Central America and Dominican Republic, November 2008

The project brought technical capacity building required by the labour market to young people of low income families in marginal urban neighbourhoods throughout Central America and the Dominican Republic, with the intention of giving them better opportunities in terms of insertion into the labour market. The project was financed by AECID and implemented by the Spanish Foundation of Youth of the Third World (JTM). CDR, in alliance with South Research, made the mid-term evaluation.

Giovanni Beluche, Bárbara Simaëys and Birgit de Clerck. "Mid-term evaluation of the agreement for labour insertion of under-privileged groups, mainly young people, women and the unemployed, oriented toward promoting educational equity". Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama and the Dominican Republic.

08-25 Mid-term evaluation Food Security Programme

Nicaragua, October 2008

Ten years after Hurricane Mitch, development efforts in northern Nicaragua have hardly had an impact on the living conditions of more than half a million rural citizens. This is explained by low product prices, deficient infrastructure and an invariably polarised political climate, long on vertical planning and short on harmonization with civil society. The PRODELSA project, aimed at improving food security and municipal planning, has hardly been able to escape the circle of centrally-oriented public policies.

Consorcio DAAS, "Evaluación de Medio Término del Proyecto de Desarrollo Local y Seguridad Alimentaria, (PRODELSA)", solicitada por la Delegación de la Comisión Europea (Managua), Noviembre 2008.

08-26 Mid-term evaluation Rural Financial Network

Ecuador, November 2008

Microfinance networks are viewed as instrumental to pro-poor financial sector development. If numerous MF institutions participate, they allow for transparency, training and a public environment that enables savings, accountability and policy debate. Ecuador's Rural Finance Network is doing just that, as transpired from the evaluation undertaken at the request of HIVOS (Netherlands). Participating banks, credit unions and NGOs can benefit more if they opt for deepening and greening their services, while keeping monitoring functional and effective.

Nusselder, Hans. "Expansion of financial services to rural and marginal areas through strengthening of technical assistance programs of the Rural Financial Network (RFR) to their partner organizations. HIVOS EC027F03 and EC027F04", Quito, November 2008.

08-27 Financial Products Development CREDISOL

Honduras, November-December 2008

CREDISOL is a rural financial institution that works in the Atlantic region of Honduras. CDR made an analysis and re-designed some of their financial products, with the objective of improving growth, performance and social mission and strengthening their risk mitigation strategies. The study also included a market analysis to have a clear idea of the competition. This initiative was financed by Triple Jump Advisory Services.

Iris Villalobos and Ariana Araujo. "Financial Product Development. CREDISOL". Honduras, November 2008.

08-28 Business planning, COMAL Network

Honduras, November 2008

Rural producers in Honduras face significant obstacles in commercializing their produce, due partly to powerful intermediaries (coyotes). The COMAL network is meant to permanently improve the bargaining position of organized producer groups on a national scale. Since 1998, CDR has been involved in advising COMA, this time in an assignment to assist with a business plan that intertwines training, product transformation, trade and information services.

Ariana Araujo and Hans Nusselder.

08-29 Course "Poverty and Human Development"

Costa Rica, August – December 2008

Poverty and its exit strategies are not mono-causal phenomena, nor are they restricted to short-term, single policy variables. The course organised by the International Center for Development Studies (ICDS) offers analytical tools for understanding the social, cultural and economic reality of the Isthmus. It deals with the sustainability of human development, its multidimensionality, the role of state, social privatization and safety nets. Issues also include the position of indigenous people,

children and migrants, combining theory and practice through field assignments.

Marije van Lidth de Jeude.

08-30 Mid-term Review INAFI (International Network Alternative Financial Institutions)

West and East Africa, November-December, 2008

International networks of specialised microcredit providers exist worldwide, but networks that encompass a variety of microfinance models on different continents are unique. The INAFI-network has been operating since the mid-1990s, based on the affinity of its members with professional microfinance in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This review is focused on the challenge to structure the network and streamline procedures.

Hans Nusselder "INAFI Organisational Review", Final Report, April 2009.

08-31 Master course "Rural Sociology and Culture"

November – December 2008

The general objective of the master programme is "to train environmentally and socially responsible leaders for doing sustainable business in and with the rural sector of Latin America and the Caribbean in international agri-food and forest-and-wood-product value chains." The objective of the course "Rural Culture and Sociology" is to provide students with the necessary analytical and practical tools to address social and cultural challenges within the rural business development framework in Latin America.

Marije van Lidth de Jeude and Koen Voorend. CATIE – INCAE.

08-32 Public health, child care and indigenous development (UNICEF)

Costa Rica, December 2008 (start)

Study about the demand and supply of integral attention services to children (0-6 years) in the Huetar Atlántica and Brunca indigenous territories of Costa Rica. It will serve as an input for the preparation of attention models to be developed in 2009.

Marije van Lidth de Jeude, Ariana Araujo, Carlos Vanderlaat, Rocío Lorría, Amílcar Castañeda, Giovanni Beluche, UNICEF.