

THE ROLE OF FOUNDATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

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SUMMARY The role of foundations and development agencies. In Latin America there is no grant seeking culture among young researchers. In the 80's and 90's there has been an important increase of researchers in all fields of study. There is a new generation of young trained thinkers, who are doing important work in understanding complex problems, but they do not have the experience and the know-how to obtain funding. Much of their work depends on their capacity to plug into on-going projects and as one of the worst consequences is the loss of young talent and creativity.

For the above mentioned reasons ten funding agencies(10) were invited to the 2nd Latin American Workshop on Nutrition and Health in Urban Areas, where presentations were made on their policies, objectives, strategies, requirements, main interests, and examples of projects they are funding at present.

Of the 10 agencies one was multinational; three European; two Latin American, three Mexican and one from the U.S.A. Although the institutions support research and intervention projects in the field of health and nutrition, diversity was shown in terms of their particular interests and the different ways through which they channel their support. Basically we could divide them into four categories: technical assistance; strategic planning; support in the field of education; and financial support to open projects.

Some of the relevant conclusions were the interest that the Polar and Cavendes Foundations from Venezuela showed in terms of designing and operating joint programs with other Latin American agencies; Herdez from Mexico showed a special openness towards supporting projects from the Mexican provinces in order to help young researchers that have difficulty getting funding; and the IFPRI showed intellectual generosity in terms of sharing its macro-vision of world tendencies in the food arena with other participants.

In general terms we could conclude by saying that the workshop established the basis for the implementation of joint projects; a network for technical exchange; and the possibility of organising future donor meetings for the support of research in nutrition and health in Latin America.

GUIDING PRINCIPALS

In Latin America there is no grant seeking culture among young researchers.

Traditionally a few well-known figures have established contact with international funding and done effective work, but young researchers have not been given the opportunity to become acquainted with funding agencies.

In Latin America in the 80's and 90's there has been an important growth of researchers in all fields of study. There is a new generation of young trained thinkers, who are doing important work in understanding complex problems, but they do not have the experience and the know-how to procure their own funding. Much of their work depends on their capacity to plug into on-going projects.

One of the worst consequences is the loss of young talent and creativity. Many of the old lines of work are being developed, but new lines are not being allowed to grow and expand in their own right.

Because of these reasons, ten foundations were invited to the 2nd Latin American Workshop on Nutrition and Health in Urban Areas held in Mexico City March 2-6,1992. The hope was for young Latin American researchers to become acquainted with national and international foundations' interests, procedures and requirements in order to strengthen their capabilities in the design of research protocols to increase their possibilities of getting grants for their own projects in the near future.

RESPONSE.

On November 30, 1991, fifty foundations from around the world were invited to participate in the event (1); 39 of them, that is 78% replied to the invitation:(2)

- 10 confirmed their attendance (20%).
- 8 expressed their interest in working with the Salvador

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Zubiran Institute of Nutrition (INNSZ) in the near future (16%).

- 21 said they had other priorities different to the issues of health and nutrition (42%).
- 11 did not answer (22%).

The ten agencies that confirmed their attendance were:

Multinational agencies.

- FAO
- International Food Policy and Research Institute (IFPRI).

European agencies.

- The European Economic Community.
- The British Council.
- GTZ.

Latin American foundations.

- Polar Foundation.
- Cavendes Foundation.

Mexican foundations.

- Mexican Foundation for Health.
- Foundation Herdez.
- Mexican Centre for Philanthropic Development.

In the following pages we will summarise their presentations focusing on their policies, objectives, strategies, requirements, main interests, and examples of projects which they are presently funding. The hope is that this information will be useful to young researchers procuring funds for their research projects and intervention models in health and nutrition in Latin America.

PRESENTATIONS

CENTRO MEXICANO PARA LA FILANTROPIA (CMF). (MEXICAN CENTRE FOR PHILANTROPIC DEVELOPMENT).

The CMF has three general objectives:

- To develop and rationalise philanthropic activities in Mexico.
- To professionalise social projects.
- To develop trust and commitment from the business community in Mexico in terms of investing in social projects.

Dr. Ricardo Govea, Director General of the centre spoke about the Directory of Philanthropic Institutions in Mexico which includes a listing of approximately 1000 institutions dedicated to philanthropic activities.(3)

He proceeded to explain the four main programmes run by

the centre:

- The permanent information service.
- The legal advice service.
- Formal education in philanthropy.
- The community fund for philanthropic development.

The informational service includes relevant information about the philanthropic institutions which operate in Mexico in terms of interests, areas they support, priorities, etc. One can have access through the directory, a computer data base, or direct telephone contact.

The legal advice service provides Mexican organisations with the legal technical advice required to comply with the USA legal requirements necessary to become tax-exempt according to Internal Revenue Service (IRS) procedures.

In order to promote formal studies in philanthropy and social change, the CMF has signed a contract with the Iberoamericana University in order to hold formal postgraduate courses and open education courses (4). There is also a strong interest in setting up a formal training programme for the education of 300 educators specialised in the problem of street children.

The Community Fund has as its objectives the collection of funds for social development projects; integration of a portfolio of sound strategic ones; and to offer Mexican industrialists the opportunity to invest in the well being of Mexico.

Dr. Govea finished his presentation inviting philanthropic institutions to professionalise their activities, and for the industry to open up to the new challenge of contributing towards the social development of the nation.

FUNDACION MEXICANA PARA LA SALUD (FUNSALUD). (MEXICAN FOUNDATION FOR HEALTH).

Funsalud was created in 1985 by Mexican businessmen interested in solving strategic problems in health. It aims to strengthen scientific and technological development; support research and the formation of high level human resources in health; identify strategic problems in health and generate projects that provide concrete solutions.

Mr. Cuautémoc Valdés, Planning Coordinator of the institution and author of a book on financing and health in Mexico (5) made the presentation. He explained the main principals of the institution: to better the health levels of the Mexican majorities; to function as an instrument for the negotiation of fresh financial resources; and to support programs of excellence in health areas.

The strategy towards this mission is focused on identifying relevant problems and generating operative solutions. The nine lines of work are:

- Philanthropic development.

- Support for research topics in strategic areas.
- Human resources development.
- Technological innovation.
- Special missions in health.
- Special programmes.
- Awards.
- Publications.
- Institutional development.

In reference to research activities, he explained the four main interests of the foundation:

- Multicentric groups in gastro-intestinal infectious diseases; moderate malnutrition; and child health.
- Health systems.
- Support to research institutes in health areas.

Research in relevant topics such as diabetes, malaria, reproductive health, and atmospheric contamination.

Mr. Valdés finished his presentation explaining the programme for "Fund Management" of research resources in health. He mentioned that Funsalud administrates the funds without charge (no overheads) plus adding the generated interest from good investment to the original research budget. This is to protect the researcher's purchasing power and to unload him from administrative constraints. He said that in the 1990-1991 year, 102 funds were handled in this way with a total amount of 40,249 million pesos and 5.5 million dollars.

FAO

FAO, the United Nations Organization for Food and Agriculture was created in 1945. It mainly focuses on providing technical assistance to the governments with which it works. It also functions as a financial liaison between strategic demands and multinational funding agencies such as the World Bank or the United Nations Development Program. It handles a non-refundable fund of seed money to activate and initiate processes. At the moment its technical unit in nutrition is composed of 40 high level specialists, based in Rome.

Dr. Florence Egal, Nutrition Officer of the Nutrition and Food Policy Division explained the present vision and some of the priorities the FAO holds with regard to the nutritional situation of urban social groups in Latin America.(6)

She commented that the undernourishment phenomenon is understood as a multifactorial process connected to health, access to food, food production, and on the whole, the integral attention required by vulnerable social groups.

In terms of diagnosis, she spoke about the syncretism which exists between nutritional deficiencies, non-contagious sicknesses, hypernutrition, lack of access to food, bad eating habits, poor quality in the products, pollution, inadequate handling, and weaknesses in the overall productive system. She spoke about the progressive abandonment of traditional foods,

fruits, vegetables and the continual high prices of basic goods. She also mentioned the solid conquests industrialised products are having among the poor population, basically because of the prestige they hold, low cost, long periods of preservation, good taste, and strong advertising support.

She concluded with the need to look for and find integral solutions in terms of finding effective educational measures, strong quality controls in the productive process, and a better relation between real nutritional needs, demand, salary and purchasing power. Above all, she established the need to discuss more openly the health and nutritional issues from an integral perspective that would allow the design and effective negotiation of concrete operative measures.

THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

The Commission of the European Economic Community in Mexico supports both research projects and intervention and applicative models. Ms. Donata von Sigsfeld, Doctor in Education, presented the Delegation's activities in support of research. (7)

She commented that the last agreement signed between the European Community and Mexico was in October 1991, opening important and varied lines of international technical cooperation. Because of the specific nature of the workshop she decided to focus on three: the Cooperation for Development Programme; the International Scientific Cooperation Programme; the Scientific and Technological Development Programme.

In regards to the Cooperation for Development Programme, she explained that the programme operates through the support of micro-projects designed and implemented by local Non-Government Organizations (NGO's) in conjunction with European NGOs. The topics that are receiving preferential attention are: migration from the countryside to the cities, pollution, drug abuse, AIDS, and rural development.

In reference to the International Scientific Cooperation Program, the objectives are directed toward promoting contact and mobility between researchers from Europe and Third World countries and establishing long range relationships by associating the best research centres from both parts of the world. She explained the priorities defined for Mexico were water supply, pollution, biotechnology applied to medicine and agriculture, protection of natural resources, and development of new materials. The hope is to work in the direction of applying these results in the struggle against extreme poverty.

The Scientific and Technological Development Programme has as its objective to strengthen scientific cooperation between Europe and Third World countries by providing financial support for projects in the fields of food deficit, prevention of sickness, and development of hygiene and general assistance systems.

THE BRITISH COUNCIL

Dr. Javín Mateos represented Dr. Andrew Martin, Scientific Advisor and Programme officer. He explained (8) that The British Council's mission is to promote culture, science and technology from the United Kingdom to the rest of the world, providing a network of contacts between government institutions, professional organisations, and businessmen.

The strategy is to facilitate either study or contacts for foreigners within Britain, or travel of English specialists, professors, or consultants, so that joint programmes can be run in different countries of the world.

The British Council has 162 offices, 116 libraries, and 52 centres specialised in the teaching of the English language. It is spread in about 90 countries. Its operative budget for 1990-91 reached 362.4 million pounds. Almost two thirds of this budget was assigned to people travelling to the United Kingdom or for British specialists travelling abroad. Examples of the topics of relevance are water supply and irrigation systems, pollution, car mechanics, electrical engineering, chemistry, refrigeration, food technology, milk derivatives, tropical medicine, agroeducation, rural development and industrial training.

In the 1990-91 period a total of 22,665 visits to the United Kingdom took place; 3,645 came from Mexico. The British Council sustains a scholarship programme for postgraduate studies for which 140 scholarships are offered to Mexico each year.

GTZ

Mr. Rainer Gross said that the GTZ is an instrument of the German Government for technical cooperation. It functions in approximately 90 countries and has an annual operative budget of 800 million dollars.

He mentioned that the GTZ does not support research projects for it is specialised in intervention models for socio-economic development. One of its main priorities is the validation of "sustainability models" which guarantee long term operation of projects.

In terms of its operative structure, he commented that funds are channelled from government to government. GTZ has representative offices in many countries, but also functions through its embassies.

In order to construct protocols for intervention, the projects have to follow the ZOPP methodology (9) which basically requires defining the main problem, constructing a hypothesis, building a causal model, a variable/indicator matrix, choosing a project design, defining a target population and the statistical model to be used. He finished his presentation by mentioning that in the case of nutrition, the GTZ has two main interests: implementing projects which strengthen the relationship between nutrition, public health and economic development; and

launching food production programmes for food security in critical areas.

POLAR FOUNDATION

Dr. Vincente Perez Dávila, M.D., a cardiologist, university professor and general director of the Polar Foundation from Venezuela, explained that the institution's main objective is to contribute to the social development of Venezuela in the areas of education, culture, health and recreation; to strengthen scientific and technological development in agriculture and industry, and the protection and rational use of natural resources; and to support altruistic institutions that seek to protect the well being of the Venezuelan population.(10)

He said that the foundation functions both as an operative and a second level financial institution, supporting its own programmes, but also receiving direct petitions from the public and private sectors of the economy.

They are structured in three main areas: Socio-educational activities; Support for scientific and technological research, and Publicity and diffusion.

In the socio-educative area, they function through a scholarship program for primary and secondary level students, including technical training.

In the research areas, the Fund for Applied Agricultural Research works to characterise agricultural problems, develop agronomical solutions, and supports specialised institutes in the field (11). At present, its emphasis is focused on soya and corn research. The Fund for Research in pollution is geared towards attending to recyclable residues; defining norms; optimising non-permanent natural resources; and promoting ecological education. (12) Examples of projects they are presently funding are the recuperation of Valencia Lake and the national campaign to keep the Caracas subway clean. In Health they have programmes for the elderly, the blind and abandoned mothers. In Nutrition they support diagnosis, research and integral intervention models.

In the area of Publicity and diffusion, they administrate an Editorial Fund which has as its main purpose the propagation of history and creativity of talented Venezuelans and the publishment and distribution of relevant research findings, both of its own projects, and of other qualified research institutions. One important example of these activities is the Dictionary of Venezuelan History which was published recently.

CAVENDES FOUNDATION

Dr. Jorge Risquez M.D., and researcher of the Cavendes Foundation of Venezuela, said that his institution was created in 1983. It has as its main objective to better the nutritional levels of the most vulnerable social groups in the Venezuelan society. It supports scientific research and applicative intervention

models.

The Foundation sustains three basic programmes: The Clinic for Nutritional Research, an Integral Rural Development Programme, and a Publications and diffusion programme.(13)

The Clinic has as its main purpose the study of the relevant topics related to undernourishment; teaching nutrition in medical and nursing schools; and fighting malnutrition practices within hospitals.

The Rural Development Program hopes to integrate education, agricultural production, and nutritional measures in an effort to provide integral attention to the vulnerable population. It integrates nutritional education, agricultural production, arts and crafts, with the distribution of nutritional supplements and complements.

The Publications and diffusion programs has published the memoirs of four symposiums on nutrition; four books on related topics, and the Nutritional Guide for Latin America which establishes desired nutritional norms, taking into consideration the cultural and socio-economic conditions of the Latin American poor. They also have a plan to strengthen their Unit for Nutritional Education which is focused on the production and distribution of didactic material: audiovisuals, educational videos, printed games, etc.

HERDEZ FOUNDATION

Don Jaime Muñoz de Baena, General Director of the Herdez Foundation from Mexico, explained that the main objective of his institution is:

“to support scientific and technological research for the production of new food products, better the existing ones, increment production systems and develop distributive mechanisms which will allow the majority of the population to have access to the food they need”.(14)

The principal areas of attention are: agriculture, fishing, nutrition, biotechnology, bromatology, food engineering, education and marketing.

The foundation offers its support through donations, financial support to projects, awards, scholarships at graduate and undergraduate level, and the publication of specialised editions.

In terms of future projects, Don Jaime spoke about the restoration of the colonial building located at the corner of Moneda streets and Seminario streets in Mexico City which will host the Foundation. He also spoke about the project to begin at an Institute for Food Culture which will have as its objective to conserve the culinary traditions of Mexico, by recuperating, classifying and researching the abundant cooking recipes from the different regions of the country.

INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE (IFPRI)

Dr. Marteen Inmick, researcher of the IFPRI, stated that the objectives of the institute are to do research in food policy in the Third World; incorporate the latest technical developments in the social sciences into the methodologies in use; combine the macro world vision with the micro perspective of the countries they work with, by including culture, history and socio-economic peculiarities; strengthen local research; make known their results; and influence relevant decision-making processes.

The IFPRI was created in 1975 due to a trilateral agreement between the Ford, the Rockefeller and the IDRC Foundations (15) In 1989 they initiated activities in Latin America, in Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and Central America.

Their research priorities for the 90's are:

- financial markets.
- agricultural technology.
- preservation of natural resources.
- intervention models for food security.

In terms of strategies, the IFPRI designs and operates joint projects with universities, research institutes, planning units of local governments, and non-government organisations. It presently works with 90 research and operative institutions around the world.

The elements that guarantee the IFPRI's work are an international staff of high level researchers; strong ties with the countries where they work; a tradition of high level and high quality research; a combination of a macro with a micro perspective; access to the most relevant information in terms of technological changes in agriculture; and experience and trustworthiness in terms of defining relevant topics and working them out in a joint manner.

CONCLUSIONS

Ten agencies attended the workshop: two were multinational; three, European, two Latin American and three Mexican. Even though the ten institutions support research and intervention projects in the field of health and nutrition, diversity was seen in terms of their particular interests and the different ways through which they channel their support. Basically we could divide them in to four categories: technical assistance; strategic planning; support in the field of education; financial support for projects.

In terms of technical assistance, FAO explained the way it provides assistance in the form of joint diagnosis, research activities or direct consulting.

With regards to strategic planning, IFPRI mentioned the methodological steps it used to obtain a macro-vision of world tendencies and combine it with a micro-vision which includes

historical, cultural and socio-economic variables, particular to the countries they work with. They also explained the strategies used to influence important decision makers in the benefit of the most poor and hungry social groups in the Third World.

In terms of education, The British Council spoke about its technical exchange and academic programmes; the CMF, about its joint activities with the Iberoamericana University to hold formal courses and seminars in the field of philanthropy; and the Polar Foundation of Venezuela commented on its wide strategy to strengthen the base of the educational pyramid by offering scholarships at primary, medium, and technical levels.

In regards to financial support, the European Community spoke about supporting both scientific research projects and intervention models; the GTZ mentioned supporting only applicative models; and Funsalud explained its policy of supporting projects according to its set of priorities.

Some of the relevant conclusions were the interest that the Polar and Cavendes Foundations from Venezuela showed in terms of designing and operating joint programmes with other Latin American agencies; Herdez showed a special openness towards supporting projects from the Mexican provinces in order to help young researchers that have difficult gaining access to funding; and the IFPRI showed intellectual generosity in terms of sharing its macro-vision of world tendencies in the food arena with other participants. In general terms we could say that the workshop established the basis for the implementation of joint projects; a network for technical exchange; and the possibility of organizing future donors' meetings in the support of Latinamerican research in health.

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