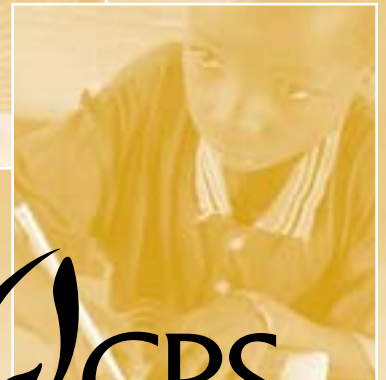

Creating Partnerships, Educating Children

Case Studies from
Catholic Relief Services




CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES



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Creating Partnerships, Educating Children

Case Studies from Catholic Relief Services

Christine Capacci Carneal and Michael Pozniak
Catholic Relief Services



“**E**ducation for sustainable development is a means to achieving many, if not most, of the Millennium Development Goals...Realizing and reaching those goals may take time, but providing all with educational opportunities will have an immediate, verifiable and measurable impact on the well being of the people of the world and on their sustainable development.”

—Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Vatican's permanent observer to the United Nations, before the Committee of the General Assembly concerned with the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (October 23, 2003)

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We are grateful for the contributions of Akanksha Marphatia, who conducted field visits, developed multiple rough drafts and provided invaluable ideas throughout the development of these case studies. We are also grateful for the expert guidance provided by Cornelia Janke of the Education Development Center (EDC) in helping to conceptualize and review these cases over many months. In addition, we appreciate the insightful input and feedback from our CRS headquarters colleagues.

Most importantly, CRS acknowledges our many dedicated and tireless staff and partners in Ghana, India, Macedonia, Kosovo, Haiti, Vietnam, Burkina Faso and Serbia. The work documented here is a result of their commitment to excellence. Any errors or omissions are solely those of the authors. We are also inspired by the numerous communities and parents around the world with whom we work in partnership, and who struggle every day to ensure their children's right to a basic education.

Foreword

In many countries around the globe, lives have been transformed through recent technological advances. Change is fast paced, and the latest innovations often defy imagination. But for 1.2 billion members of the human family who live on less than \$1 a day—one of every five people in the developing world—change has been anything but quick. Indeed, it is the entrenched nature of this absolute poverty that defies imagination.

When progress occurs, it is often fleeting. Thus, the world bore witness to a decline in the number of absolute poor between 1993 and 1996, but the trend was short-lived. With the advent of the global financial crisis in 1997, the number was once again on the rise. And, when China is excluded from the analysis, the number of people living on under \$1 a day has actually been steadily rising since 1987. Indeed, in sub-Saharan Africa, average income levels are now lower than they were at the end of the 1960s.

This stark reality served as the backdrop for the Millennium Summit held in September 2000. There, 189 countries endorsed eight goals that serve as an exit ramp for those trapped on the highway of perennial poverty. The goals are readily understood if not necessarily readily achieved: (1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; (2) achieve universal primary education; (3) promote gender equality and empower women; (4) reduce child mortality; (5) improve the health of mothers; (6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; (7) ensure environmental sustainability; and, (8) create global partnerships that support the achievement of these goals.

Education—getting more children to enter better schools and then complete the prescribed course of study—is a key ingredient of the "magic potion" that will turn this rhetoric into reality. Hunger, disease and poverty cannot be eradicated without conquering illiteracy. Women cannot assume their rightful place in society if more than one half billion of them cannot read, write or perform basic arithmetic functions (as was the case in the year 2000).

Today, more than 325 million children are out of school at primary and secondary levels. Why? Here are five answers that provide most, though not all, of the explanation:

- It is too burdensome for families with members who live on less than one dollar per day to meet both the out-of-pocket and opportunity costs of school attendance; children need to contribute to the family's economic survival;
- Parents often view existing educational opportunities to be of very low quality; they perceive that the investment they must make to send their children to school is unwarranted in light of anticipated returns;
- Poor countries—despite dedicating a relatively high proportion of their national budget to education—often cannot educate all the children who wish to attend school. This leads to the practice of rationing school places through policies that systematically exclude or discourage populations deemed to be marginal (e.g., special needs students; children from ethnic and linguistic minority communities; girls);
- Millions of children are too sick or hungry to attend school; they are trapped in a

downward spiral that begins with poor attendance, progresses to academic failure, and concludes with abandonment of the education enterprise; and

- Education systems are insensitive to what it takes to bring more girls to the classroom: schools that are close to home; separate toilet facilities for girls; encouraging teachers; instructional materials with female role models; and, whenever possible, child care facilities for younger siblings who have not yet reached school age.

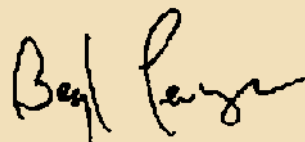
The present volume contains eight case studies that offer important insights into how these five challenges can be met. Vignettes from Ghana and India illustrate how parents and other community members can become actively engaged in demanding and contributing to the availability of quality education for their children. Parental involvement has been shown in numerous studies around the world to be of critical importance in improving educational access and quality.

The case studies from Macedonia, Kosovo and Haiti allow us to explore the mutually reinforcing and reciprocal linkages between civil society and education. If there is one lesson that has characterized the evolution of development practice over the last decade, it is this: strong civil society is a necessary precondition for sustainable development. Schooling is both cause and effect; universal education helps to create the bonds of trust among citizens that are the underpinning of a functional civil society. At the same time, schooling becomes more accessible and of higher quality when people work through civil society organizations to demand accountability from teachers and other government officials for what children learn.

We learn through reports from Vietnam, Burkina Faso, and Serbia how external aid organizations (here, Catholic Relief Services) can serve as a critical link between local communities and policy-making bodies thereby helping to give voice to the voiceless. Collectively, these three cases also present a roadmap for how international organizations can form and maintain partnerships with national authorities to benefit vulnerable children. Within the broader field of development, we have clearly entered the "era of partnership." Given this new context, these studies are especially timely and valuable.

In summary, these case studies allow us to gain a rare "from the ground" view of what is needed to address each of the five challenges noted earlier. The cases also open our eyes to the important role external actors can play in helping to create an enabling environment that favors universal basic education.

The eighth Millennium Development Goal challenges people in both the North and South to create global partnerships that support the ambitious vision endorsed by most of the world's nations. This is a lofty aspiration. But, the eight case studies presented here offer an array of invaluable insights into how this can be achieved. As such, they make for important reading.



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February 22, 2004

Acronym List

AED	Academy for Educational Development
BED	Bureau for Educational Development
CCE	Center for Civic Education
CFMC	Community Food Management Committee
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSC	Community Steering Committee
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
EDC	Education Development Center
EPIP	Education Participation Improvement Project
ESP	Education Support Program
fCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
FFP	Food for Peace
GES	Ghana Education Service
KDOE	Kosovo Department of Education
LMSSS	Lodi Multipurpose Social Service Society
MEBA	Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy
MGBS	Mandala Grameena Bhagsyama Samstha
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MVF	Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiya Foundation
NATO	North American Treaty Alliance
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIES	National Institute for Education Sciences
PC	Parent Council
PDDEB	Plan Décennal de Développement de l'Éducation de Base
PSP	Parent-School Partnership
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PTC	Parent Teacher Council
PTF	Technical and Financial Partners
QUIPS	Quality Improvement in Primary Schools
SMC	School Management Committee
SPIP	School Performance Improvement Plan
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMIK	United Nations Mission in Kosovo
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VIP	Villages in Partnership

FROM PARTICIPATION TO PARTNERSHIP:

Redefining the Role of Communities in Improving Education

*Case Studies from GHANA
and INDIA*

Decentralization has emerged as an important trend in current education reform strategies undertaken by governments in different parts of the world. This creates a growing opportunity for local communities to exert their right to quality and relevant education, and to redefine their own roles in making this happen. It also, however, increases the likelihood that communities may bear a disproportionate burden of the costs of education. As the role of communities in supporting education continues to evolve, it is important to re-examine the nature of their participation carefully.

Active participation by communities in education can help accomplish many goals. Among them are increased access to and retention of children in schools (in particular girls), better links between learning programs and the needs of the populations they serve, and improved teacher attendance and accountability. Mobilized communities are more will-

ing to contribute scarce resources to education, and in many cases, even participate in managing local schools. Given these many contributions, it is time for communities to move from merely participating in projects designed by others to becoming genuine partners involved in education systems, influencing and making joint decisions on projects and policies.

This begins by distinguishing between the terms *participation* and *partnership*. *Participation* has been described as a process through which stakeholders influence and guide development initiatives and the decisions and resources that affect them.¹ While in theory participation is good and something to strive for, in reality it often denotes a contribution to an externally initiated project. By contrast, *partnership* is a relationship of mutual commitment built upon a shared vision and spirit of solidarity.² Building effective partnerships with communities is an ongoing effort, requiring much more time and work than merely ensuring participation.

The following case studies illustrate how CRS has both facilitated and modeled partnerships in Ghana and India, enabling communities to move beyond project-oriented goals to genuine partnerships that aim to improve education, especially for the most vulnerable children. Both cases underscore the importance of partnership and are testaments to the idea that no single entity—government, non-governmental organization (NGO), or community—can provide quality education on its own.

¹ The World Bank (1996), *The World Bank Participation Sourcebook*.

² CRS (2002), *Partnership Program Guidance*.

GHANA: FROM SCHOOL FEEDING TO ADVOCACY



The northern regions of Ghana are less developed than the southern regions of the country and experience higher levels of absolute poverty and food insecurity. Families

in northern Ghana, and throughout rural West Africa, make daily choices that affect their economic well-being. Many children cannot attend school because of the demands of subsistence livelihoods and poverty. The opportunity cost of having girls in school as opposed to working in the home, caring for younger siblings, or earning a wage in the marketplace is tallied by each head of household. School fees, uniforms, and books all add to this cost and often weigh against enrolling children in school or allowing them to attend regularly. Many children who begin primary school are forced to drop out before completing their studies. Children have access to quality education only when their parents see it as a worthwhile investment. In resource-deprived communities, working with parents so they understand the value of this investment is critical.

School Feeding as an Entry Point for Education

CRS began implementing school

feeding programs in northern Ghana when it started working in the country in 1958. Through its USAID/Food for Peace-supported Education Support Program (ESP), CRS has shown that providing a daily meal in schools, combined with a special-incentive take-home ration for girls who attend regularly, can have a marked impact on a community's willingness to support education. By training the community itself to manage a school canteen through Community Food Management Committees (CFMCs), CRS has enabled people in rural, food-insecure areas to tangibly influence factors that affect their lives.

Once a community is mobilized to take charge of one type of resource, it begins to ask how other resources are being managed. In education, this manifests itself in community demands for children to attend school not only to eat but also to learn.

An evaluation of ESP found that "the success...in promoting community participation in education was, arguably, [its] single most important achievement."³ The evaluation noted that "community participation in ESP schools goes well beyond school feeding. Communities have provided labor for constructing classrooms and kitchens and making other infrastructure improvements. They have planted orchards and wood lots around school perimeters. They have monitored the attendance of teachers, and even discussed the quality of teaching with head

Taa nye ni jiem (We are grateful)

In the community of Farinsa, a CRS-trained Community Food Management Committee (CFMC) manages the school feeding program. This has brought the community closer to the school. Almost all CFMC members are on the school compound and interact with teachers and pupils regularly. Parents now actively speak with teachers about their children's progress and contribute to teaching and learning materials. PTA Chairman Thomas Aparik says, "We now have a picture of what happens daily in the school, so we will ensure that pupils are regular and punctual at school."

3 Development Alternatives, Inc. (2001), *Final Evaluation of USAID/Ghana's PL 480 Title II Program*.

teachers. In some schools, PTAs have offered housing, food, and salary supplements to teachers. PTA activism has also led to the dismissal of teachers who were persistently absent or whose teaching was not judged adequate."⁴

Increases in overall enrollment and attendance—the ultimate goals of the program—have followed. Over a four-year period, enrollment in program schools increased by 4 percent, and the enrollment of girls increased at a faster rate than that of boys.⁵ Average attendance rates increased during the period as well—by 11 percent over baseline for all students and 14 percent for girls.⁶ The final evaluation credits CRS interventions involving communities and parents for much of this change.

Building on Community Success

ESP achievements set the stage for CRS to become one of the implementing partners for the USAID Quality Improvement in Primary Schools (QUIPS) program for Ghana's three northern regions.⁷ QUIPS aims to improve the quality of education through teacher and supervisor training, district-level management training, and enhanced community awareness and participation. It complements a recent government decentralization strategy known as fCUBE (Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education), which expresses a national commitment to involve communities in managing schools.



CRS' work with parents and community members provided fertile soil in which the technical inputs of QUIPS could take root. Without community support for education as a solid foundation, QUIPS would have limited impact. Community respect for teachers, renewed pride in school infrastructure, and a belief that the time children spend in school will ultimately benefit the entire family can be attributed in part to the initial achievements made by communities to manage that simple yet invaluable resource: food.

From Participation to Partnership: Steps Along the Way

Moving from participation to partnership, of course, is a multi-step process that takes time. In Ghana, CRS promotes the following four steps for working in partnership with communities.

1. **Involving Communities as Partners in the Planning Phase.** CRS works with a community in the initial planning phase to ensure the proper assessment of needs. This is done by using an asset-based approach that identifies a community's strengths and aspirations, rather than its problems and deficiencies. CRS works with the entire community to identify why school enrollment, retention, and completion rates are low. Emphasis is placed on discovering and building on the strengths, assets, and best practices of the

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Academy for Educational Development (AED) and Education Development Center (EDC) are the other main implementing partners of QUIPS.

community. As one participant said, "If you look for success, you find more successes."⁸ The process involves interviewing boys, girls, men, women, and teachers in separate groups regarding education-related problems. The groups then come together in a community-wide discussion using activities such as drama to explore the different ways each group, and the entire community, can improve the primary school. This lays the foundation for the next step.

2. Increasing Local Participation in School Activities. In this step, community participation begins to go beyond CRS-organized events. The community begins to organize and take part in education rallies and mobilization efforts, works to improve the school's infrastructure and environment, provides teaching and learning resources, and monitors student and teacher attendance. Community-based project teams, composed of community animators and PTA leaders, work regularly with the community. The presence of these teams increases the effectiveness of community efforts and heightens the community's visibility at the district and regional levels of the Ghana Education Service (GES).⁹

3. Reinforcing Community-Level Organizations. In Ghana, PTAs and School Management Committees (SMCs) are the main community

associations involved in schools.¹⁰ Mandated by the fCUBE, almost every school has a PTA or SMC, though many are dormant. Since these groups are part of both the ESP and QUIPS programs, CRS has made concerted efforts to revive them. CRS trains PTA and SMC members in areas such as leadership, volunteerism, community mobilization, education policy, gender awareness and equity, and fundraising. Results show that this training has increased the capabilities of PTAs and SMCs and also increased their ability to identify the respective responsibilities of the community and local government in meeting education needs. This encourages the community to be accountable for its actions and to hold the government accountable for what it should provide. With increased accountability comes increased community and government trust in PTAs and SMCs, enhancing their reputation as legitimate partners in the education system.

4. Enhancing Communities' Abilities to Define and Manage Their Own Education Needs. Once PTAs and SMCs have been trained, CRS introduces them to the School Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP).¹¹ The SPIP is a tool that helps communi-

Kobukko Community Advocates for Increased Resources from the Government

The school started as a shed near the river. It was hard to reach, provided little shelter from the afternoon sun, and often required rebuilding during the rainy season. Initial awareness raising campaigns led by CRS helped Kobukko residents understand their right to a proper school building. Community members worked together on a School Performance Improvement Plan and used it to appeal to CRS and the Ghana Education Service (GES) (via a district assembly person who participates in the School Management Committee) for a new school and more teachers. The GES provided two more teachers. CRS provided materials and a mason to teach the community how to build classrooms, which were constructed within two months. "We now not only have a three-classroom building but also new skills with which we can get jobs as masons."

—Interview with community members and GES officials

8 CRS (2002), *The Link: QUIPS in the North*, issue 4.

9 The GES is an arm of the Ministry of Education responsible for implementing policy at the pre-tertiary level.

10 SMCs are comprised of leaders of the PTA and a district assembly person. They communicate community concerns to the GES.

11 The SPIP tool was developed collectively by QUIPS implementing partners and the GES.

ties better define their own educational needs, assess whether or not external development projects meet these needs, and develop complementary activities.

CRS introduces SPIP during a community-wide meeting, co-facilitated by CRS and a community member at the beginning of the school term. During the meeting, the community identifies key activities that can enhance teaching and learning in the school. It then selects specific tasks, chooses managers for each task, identifies resources needed, and sets a time frame for achieving targeted activities. Thereafter, local partners and community facilitators meet periodically to monitor progress on achieving these goals. During these meetings, CRS assists the community in evaluating its own progress. An

example of a completed SPIP from the community of Kamega is detailed in the table below.

Equipped with tools such as the SPIP, communities are better able to identify their own education needs and articulate their right to quality education. This SPIP—and the mobilization skills learned while working with it—helps communities lobby the GES for more resources and support in improving schools.

Through this four-step process, CRS' relationship with communities deepens and matures as communities begin to see themselves as legitimate stakeholders in the education system. The trust and solidarity that develop during this process transform communities from implementers of a CRS project to genuine partners in the effort to improve education.

SPIP for Kamega Primary School					
Target	Task/Activity	Who Is Responsible	Necessary Resources	Time Frame	Success Indicators
Provide English/math textbooks in the ratio of 1:1 to library books	Levy parents (cash/kind) Appeal to GES	Parents PTA/SMC Head teacher Assembly person	Money Farm produce	October 2002 to April 2003	Availability of texts in ratio desired
Construct library	Acquire land Cash contribution Contribute food Contact assembly person and District Assembly	Chief/elders Parents SMC/PTA executives Head teachers, Assembly person	Money Labor Land Foodstuff	January 2003 to April 2003	Library built and in use
Acquire sports equipment and playground	Levy parents Appeal to religious bodies, MP, chief, etc.	Parents SMC/PTA executives Head teacher Chief/elders District sports organization	Land Labor Money	October 2002 to December 2002	Playground and sports equipment in use by children
Provide urinal and toilet facility	Appeal to NGOs	Community SMC/PTA executives Assembly person	Money Labor Foodstuff	January 2003 to April 2003	Urinal and toilet facility built and in use

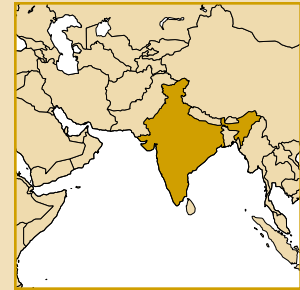
Looking Ahead: Fostering Partnerships Between Communities and Government

While CRS' initiatives are changing how communities contribute to improving schools, it must be recognized that communities alone cannot raise quality or reform the education system. A concerted effort from all stakeholders is required to achieve this long-term goal. In the long run, the likelihood of the GES following through on promises to improve quality, and how and where it does so, depends on improved partnerships and dialogue with communities. Fortunately the current policy environment in Ghana creates space for community-government partnerships to mature.

CRS tries to take advantage of this space by building stronger bridges between these two actors. As part of the QUIPS project, CRS trains district and regional education officials in community mobilization techniques, co-management of education initiatives with communities, capacity building training for other government officials, and monitoring and evaluation. Like community members, government officials are now becoming more engaged and active in projects because they feel a greater sense of ownership in schools, and because communities value their contribution. This helps ensure that gains in education are sustained. Together, these partners work to strengthen the Ghanaian education system and ensure that the fCUBE mandate of every child in school is met.

INDIA: FROM WORK TO SCHOOL

Every child not in school is a child laborer.¹²



It is a simple fact: a child who attends school is less likely to work, less susceptible to exploitation, and more likely to experience improved opportunities in the future. But roughly 100 million of India's children do not attend school and are subject to child labor.¹³ Many of these children work in people's homes, on farms, in fisheries, in factories, in mines, or as prostitutes. They do not attend school for a variety of reasons: poverty; lack of awareness among parents about the importance of education; cultural beliefs; inadequate facilities; irrelevant curricula; and poor teaching. Parents under economic stress may believe they have no choice but to encourage their children to work. Other children may not attend school for more sinister reasons: they are lured by employers' false promises of gifts, are bonded to employers by their parents' debts, or are kidnapped and forced to work. They are stripped of childhood in return for their cheap, obedient labor.

Employers often rationalize the exploitation through one myth or another. Farmers, for instance, have argued that young girls make the best cotton pickers because of their height and "nimble" fingers. Girls aged 7 to 14 comprise 85 percent of the total labor employed in hybrid cottonseed

¹² Motto of MVE, CRS' local partner in Andhra Pradesh.

¹³ Wazir (2002), *Getting Children Out of Work and Into School*.

production in India's southern state of Andhra Pradesh, the state with the highest percentage of child labor in the country.¹⁴ Other work commonly performed by children includes cattle

From Cotton Fields to Bridge Course Camps

Fourteen-year-old Bhagya Lakshmi quietly explained how, tired of picking cotton on a farm and hauling heavy bags of sand at a construction site while her friends attended school, she stole money from her parents and ran away from home.

Initially, Bhagya was drawn to the school—part of a program to abolish child labor developed by CRS partner Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiya Foundation—for the security it offered. On the farm, if she were caught talking with friends, she would work the rest of the day without pay. And though she often experienced severe chest pains after weeding the pesticide-soaked soil—particularly after rain loosened the chemicals from the ground—such ailments hardly exempted her from work, presenting a sort of catch-22. If she asked for a break, the farmer would scold her, saying, "Why did you come if you cannot work?" If she stayed home, he would snap, "Why weren't you here?"

Now, free from hard labor, well fed, and surrounded by friends, Bhagya has come to appreciate education for its own merits, realizing she needs "to know about things." If she needs to travel by bus, for instance, "I can find out for myself by reading [the signs]. I don't need to get directions." The bridge school's intensive program covers years of a curriculum in months, meaning Bhagya can matriculate in eighth grade less than a year after arriving. As for her long-term future, she wants to become a teacher.

grazing and agriculture, harvesting of crops (girls), and plowing (boys). Domestic work, done mostly by girls, includes collecting water, fuel, and wood; taking care of siblings; washing clothes; and cooking and other household work.¹⁵

The Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiya Foundation (MVF), an Indian NGO whose mission is to eradicate child labor, was founded on the premise that every child not in school is a child laborer and that the only way to eliminate child labor is through full-time formal education. CRS' work in education in Andhra Pradesh has been greatly influenced and shaped by the philosophy and approach of MVF.¹⁶ It is a holistic approach, geared toward working with community members to stress the importance of education. Community members themselves act as advocates to gain broad support for ending child labor practices. These extensive mobilization activities

undertaken by members of the

community help to ensure that children, parents, and employers value education as a right of every child.

This approach has now become a movement in Andhra Pradesh, widely adopted by the government, NGOs, and communities. To contribute to this movement, CRS facilitates links between its own extensive partner network and MVF to maximize the strengths of each partner and to reach many thousands of children. The partners employ a series of activities to involve all community members in the process of withdrawing children from work and enrolling them in school. These activities are outlined below.¹⁷

1. **Identify Core Group of Volunteer Grassroots Leaders.** Volunteer leaders willing to participate in activities to eliminate child labor must be able to internalize the basic philosophy that every child not in school is a child laborer. Volunteers may come from youth groups, women's groups, or teachers' unions. CRS partners mobilize and train volunteers on how to convince parents and employers that children should be released from labor and enrolled in school. The participation of existing community groups is key to success. Young people, recently educated themselves and often the first in their families to become so, tend to be the best advocates for education in a community.

14 CRS (2002), *Final Evaluation of Quality Education for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor*.

15 Ibid.

16 CRS' education programs to eradicate child labor in Andhra Pradesh were funded by a two-year grant from USAID. This funding ended in September, 2002. CRS has since used its own private funding to continue these initiatives.

17 These activities are adapted from MVF's approach outlined in Wazir (2002), *Getting Children Out of Work and Into School*.

2. Raise Community Awareness.

Volunteers use a variety of traditional methods to attempt to raise community awareness, including street theatre, pada yatras (processions through the village on foot), public meetings, songs, plays, and door-to-door and child-to-child campaigns. Participation from a wide variety of community members is essential for success. Children talk about their right to education, teachers about the benefits of learning, and parents about the need to find alternative financial means.

3. Appeal to Employers. Volunteers appeal to employers' sense of justice to release bonded laborers.

Community pressure (enhanced by a variety of groups working cooperatively) plays a pivotal role in changing employers' attitudes toward children. When acceptability of children as laborers begins to decline in the community, employers can no longer employ children as easily as before. If this initial approach fails, volunteers inform employers that bonded labor violates the law and that they may face heavy penalties if reported to authorities.

4. Change Parents' Beliefs and Practices. Many parents believe they cannot remove a child from bonded labor until a debt is fully paid.

Volunteers inform such parents of their rights and that they are under no legal obligation to repay outstanding loans against their child. Other parents are concerned about how to get by without the extra income their children earn. Community mobilizers encourage

parents to take on the wage-earning activities of their children and to bargain for better wages for themselves. They also encourage parents to change spending patterns, increase their working hours, or diversify their income sources.

5. Conduct House-to-House Surveys. Youth volunteers conduct surveys to determine how many children are in the community and how many are involved in child labor. The survey results are shared at a community-wide meeting attended by all stakeholders, including community elders and leaders.

6. Enroll Out-of-School Children in Bridge Course Camps. Once all out-of-school children have been

identified, the most important step is to enroll them in appropriate education classes. To get these children into school, CRS and its partners support residential education camps. Commonly referred to as bridge course camps, these schools use accelerated learning methods to teach children the basics of reading and writing. Because the camps are residential, children are protected from working even when they are not in class. The camps provide a safe place for children to live and learn as they transition from difficult working environments back into their communities and, eventually,

Credit the Women

CRS partner Villages in Partnership (VIP) works closely with Mandala Grameena Bhagsyama Samstha (MGBS), a registered community-based organization, to convince parents and employers to release children from work.

Many of the local women did not attend school themselves because they had to work, and they saw an opportunity to send their own daughters to school. The small village school was not equipped to take in more than 100 children, however, and teachers were not trained to work with children who had never attended regular school classes.

Hearing of the success of bridge camps in other mandals, MGBS asked VIP to start a similar camp in their area. VIP in turn appealed to CRS for support, and proposed that the women run the camp. Women leaders were then trained to manage residential education camps.

One year later, they successfully enrolled over 100 girls and boys in two camps, oversaw recruitment, facilitated community teacher trainings, ensured that activists continue to build links between the children and parents, and helped integrate children into regular formal schools. It was a joint community effort.



into the formal school system.¹⁸ It is important to understand the role of bridge course camps not as a final step, but rather as a means to an end. Getting working children into formal schools to complete a basic education is the ultimate objective.

Bridge Course Camps

There are two kinds of bridge courses: the short-term course of 6 months for primary school-aged children (9–11 years) and the long-term course of 18 months for older children (11–14 years). (Children younger than 9 are mainstreamed directly into formal schools.) Community volunteers, either teachers or others with at least a secondary education, teach at the bridge camps and serve as role models for the children. CRS partners train these volunteers in child-friendly and participatory teaching methodologies. Once children are ready to be mainstreamed into formal schools, CRS partners facilitate the process of children taking an entrance exam.

To get children into bridge course camps, one- or two-day events are held where children, parents, and communities interact with teachers, volunteers, and children already in bridge courses to get a sense of the benefits of education. Often these events are followed by setting up temporary "motivation centers" for the most difficult to reach child laborers, many of whom are girls. These drop-in centers provide a space where children can come and spend a few hours every day and take part in fun activities. Parents can also meet

informally there to discuss their hesitations about education.

The centers are typically held in a place easily accessible for working children, and facilitated by a volunteer from the local community. Some centers operate before the school day begins, others in the afternoon to bring in children after work. Some use the local school premises to increase familiarity with the school in a non-threatening way. Although some literacy skills are taught, the emphasis is not on formal teaching but on providing a supportive environment where children and their parents can discuss concerns, share experiences, and gain confidence. Because the motivation centers are not permanent structures, they represent a transitional stage to the bridge courses and, eventually, to formal school.¹⁹

An Approach That Works

This approach of engaging community members as active partners in getting children into school is producing a profound shift in attitudes in Andhra Pradesh. Many parents, though illiterate, now have the confidence to demand education for their children and make great sacrifices of time and money to ensure that children stay in school. Work previously done by children has been redistributed among other adults in the family. Families have also adjusted by becoming more organized in their work and spending patterns.²⁰ Some parents say that goats and other livestock are no longer reared because investing in their children's education is

¹⁸ CRS also provides these camps with Title II food commodities from USAID/Food for Peace.

¹⁹ Wazir (2002), *Getting Children Out of Work and Into School*.

²⁰ Ibid.

worth more than investing in extra livestock.²¹ Despite the conventional wisdom that a child's income plays a crucial role in a family's economy, many parents have begun to spend more money than before on their children.

Above all, parents' confidence in the capabilities of their children has increased substantially. Parents now take pride in their children's new status, using the word *telavi* to describe their girls and boys as now smarter and displaying more intelligence. Invariably, parents now want their children to continue their education.²²

The attitudes of employers, too, are beginning to change. Community pressure has influenced some employers to voluntarily sponsor children who work with them to enroll in schools and bridge camps. In the district of Eluru, a ceremony was held for landlords who agreed to release bonded children and write off their debts. With the decline in the availability of child labor, larger landlords have been forced to change cropping patterns. Floriculture, which depended to a large extent on children during the flower-picking operations, is no longer popular.

The Importance of Partner Networks

MVF's philosophy has grown into a movement in Andhra Pradesh, thanks in part to a vibrant partner network that CRS has helped to cultivate. One of CRS' advantages is an extensive network of some 2,500 partners across India, many of them Catholic

church diocesan groups working in remote, hard-to-reach areas and serving the poorest of the poor (tribal groups, scheduled castes, and minorities). By linking MVF with some of these partners in Andhra Pradesh, CRS helps replicate and expand this successful approach.

The way it works is simple. MVF shares its proven methodology of working in partnership with communities to move children out of labor and into school. Catholic church and other partners provide access to remote rural communities and schools. After CRS links these partners, they are trained in MVF's approach and adapt it to their own working environments. Some of these partners are themselves emerging as movement leaders in their own districts—Lodi Multipurpose Social Service Society (LMSSS) in Warangal, Loyola Integrated Tribal Development Society in Khammam, Social Service Society in Eluru, and Multipurpose Social Service Society in Cuddpah. These church partners have even extended technical support to other, smaller NGOs, which have started similar programs.

Without such a network, the success of each partner would be confined to its own particular area of expertise. CRS adds value by linking various partners together into a collaborative network. The results are many: MVF expands its successful model; church and other partners build their capacity to mobilize communities to support education; and most impor-

Working Well Together

"What makes us work well together is CRS' partnership model, which draws on our comparative strengths of capacity and resources. CRS provides technical guidance, strengthens our monitoring and evaluation capacity, and provides resources. We match these resources with our own funds and assign staff members experienced in community mobilization to oversee the project. Together, we are able to form ideas on how we can further the leadership abilities of communities."

—Father Raja
Head of Lodi Multipurpose Social Service Society (CRS partner) in Warangal, Andhra Pradesh

21 CRS (2002), *Final Evaluation of Quality Education for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor*.

22 Ibid.



tantly, thousands more children make the transition from work to school.

This last point is worth reiterating. The success of CRS' work in India is measured not only by the nature of the partnerships established, but also by how well such partnerships accomplish education objectives. Data on enrollment and attendance for girls and boys in bridge course camps are collected, analyzed and shared with program participants. Partners also monitor the number of children mainstreamed from bridge course camps to formal schools, as well as the number of working children in targeted communities over time. It is these indicators that ultimately determine the effectiveness of partnerships with communities.

Looking Ahead: Strengthening Partnerships with Government

As communities meet their responsibility to enroll children in schools, they increasingly look to government to enforce child labor laws and improve links between bridge course camps and formal schools. This is now happening: the state government in Andhra Pradesh has declared children who attend bridge course camps exempt from exam fees, and has agreed to enroll children into formal schools at any time during the year. Now CRS and its partners are advocating for more accurate reporting by the state government on the number of out-of-school children.

REFLECTIONS ON COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

By fostering true partnerships at the local level, CRS helps communities and

local organizations do more than construct additional school classrooms or run school canteens. Community members and local organizations learn how to analyze what is happening in their communities and in their schools, and interact with authorities to design proper responses to education problems that engage all stakeholders. The following are some lessons learned from Ghana and India.

- An essential first step in moving from participation to partnership is planning with the community. Cooperative planning in the initial phase of a project helps form a foundation of agreement and clarification of roles while building the local capacity to sustain partnerships.
- Cultivating partnerships takes time, particularly at the beginning. Having a long-term presence in and commitment to countries and communities facilitates a gradual shift from communities' participation in specific projects to their taking on more of a central role in supporting education. Mutual trust and the relationships that develop and take root during this time provide the foundation for strong and effective partnerships.
- Partnerships can be established between and among any groups for a variety of common purposes. It is important to build partnerships at many levels—between NGOs and communities, between different organizations, between organizations and government, and between governments and communities. Expanding our view of partnerships helps to build stronger, more vibrant networks with greater impact.

- When communities are engaged as true partners and networks of complementary partners are cultivated, significant progress can be made toward education for all.



STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY THROUGH EDUCATION

Case Studies from MACEDONIA, KOSOVO, and HAITI

Education systems provide an excellent means by which to strengthen civil society. With their vast reach and ready infrastructure, they offer tremendous potential for shaping democratic attitudes and behaviors and building vibrant civil



societies. This can be done directly through what students learn in the classroom, and indirectly through mobilizing parent groups and other stakeholders to participate in their children's education at local and even national levels. Democratic citizenship, in other words, can be both taught and practiced through education systems.

There are, however, debates about the essence of programs that work through education systems to strengthen civil society. Should they be labeled "education" or

"civil society"? These debates too often miss the point. In reality, such programs represent the point at which education and civil society—or democracy and governance—converge. They provide examples of cross-sectoral integration and are therefore useful cases for examining lessons that can help shape joint programming in the future.

The link between education and civil society is most apparent in civic education programs, whether for children (school based) or adults (non-school based). Studies indicate that in order for such programs to be effective, they should use participatory methods that reinforce and model how democratic processes should work; offer opportunities for direct political engagement; focus on themes immediately relevant to people's daily lives; and bring parents, teachers, and school administrators into school-based programs so that messages are reinforced outside the classroom.²³

There is considerably less information, however, on programs that aim to strengthen civil society and build democratic citizenship by mobilizing parent and citizen groups to participate in education systems. Perhaps this can be attributed to the different goals of such programs. Some see strengthening education stakeholder groups as a means to an end, with the ultimate goal being improved education for children. Others view strengthening stakeholder participation as a legitimate goal in itself, regardless of whether specific education objectives are met. Rather than resolve this debate, the cases that follow show that civil society can be strengthened in schools as well as outside them, in any

23 USAID Office of Democracy and Governance (2002), *Approaches to Civic Education: Lessons Learned*.

place where people come together, and at any time during people's lives.²⁴

These cases demonstrate the different ways in which CRS has worked to strengthen both education and civil society in Macedonia, Kosovo, and Haiti. All three countries are struggling, with varying degrees of success and difficulty, toward democracy. These cases represent the two types of approaches described above: shaping the nature of what children learn in the classroom as well as how stakeholder groups participate in the education system. In Macedonia, CRS worked with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Center for Civic Education (CCE) to introduce a civic education curriculum into all of the country's elementary schools. In Kosovo and Haiti, CRS is strengthening the ability of school and regional-based Parent Teacher Councils (PTCs) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) to be more active participants in the education system and beyond. Although each of these programs operates within a unique context, together they offer several common lessons.

MACEDONIA: THE PATH TO CIVIL SOCIETY BEGINS AT SCHOOL



The Legacy of Socialism

The legacy of socialism in Macedonia is

limited engagement in public decisions that affect people's lives.

There is a lack of open participation in civil society by individuals and groups at the citizen and governmental levels, and limited grassroots and citizen-responsive government initiatives. This is exacerbated by recent tensions between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians that have led to outbursts of violent conflict. Authority and political power struggles in Macedonia have led to increasingly weak relations between groups at varying levels of society.

These factors inhibit effective and democratic processes of participation by a diverse cross-section of society. Poorly defined communication mechanisms, limited opportunities to participate in decision-making, and weak or dysfunctional relationships between stakeholders further challenge Macedonia's ability to transition toward a strong civil society. The future success and sustainability of this transition will depend in many ways on the next generation of leaders—on the education they receive at an early age and the models introduced to them by adults in their communities and their country.

"The civic education program is exactly what our students need in this state of transition of our country and our educational system."

—Golubina Gorgjievska

Bureau for Educational Development
Ministry of Education, Macedonia

A Very Positive Impact

"There is no doubt that, on the evidence available, this project is having a very positive impact on the learning experience of students from kindergarten through to grade 6. It has changed teaching methods and drawn teachers closer together in advising on portfolios. As far as teachers are concerned, Foundations of Democracy and Project Citizen are embedded in the schools. [The project] has involved parents more in the work of the school and made them, and the local community, more aware of civic education issues."

—Mid-term review,
Scottish Qualifications Authority

24 Birzėa (2000), *Education for Democratic Citizenship: A Lifelong Learning Perspective*.

Civic Education Makes Its Debut

In order to foster the growth of participatory democracy in Macedonia, continued reinforcement of the principles of democracy, cooperative participation, transparency, and respect for diversity is essential in schools. The introduction of civic education into the Macedonian formal school curriculum is one way this transition is being fostered. Civic education is an integral part of the process of educating citizens about their roles and responsibilities in a democratic society. It is also important for ensuring that citizens have the knowledge and skills to fully participate in their communities and effectively exercise their civic rights and duties. CRS has been working with the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) in Macedonia for the past five years to make civic education a permanent part of the national curriculum.

In 1998, CRS began implementing a USAID-funded civic education project in 120 elementary schools. Its two main partners in this initiative have been the Bureau for Educational Development (BED) and the Center for Civic Education (CCE). The BED is part of the MoES and is responsible for curriculum development and the professional development of teachers. The U.S.-based CCE provides technical

assistance in curriculum development for civic education. CRS manages the project by facilitating the involvement of these partners and bringing in other stakeholders, such as Parent Councils (PCs) and other international technical expertise. The project works with teachers, school management staff, PCs, and government officials to introduce the *Foundations of Democracy* civic education curriculum for students in kindergarten and grades 1–4 and the *Project Citizen* civic education curriculum for students in grades 5–6. The curricula for both levels were developed by the CCE and adapted to the local context by Macedonian educators at BED.

Through the *Foundations of Democracy*, younger students are introduced to the concepts of authority, privacy, responsibility, and justice. Through *Project Citizen*, older students work together to identify and study a public-policy issue in their school or community, develop an action plan for implementing their policy, and produce a portfolio of their work. In several cases, students have succeeded in resolving a public-policy problem with community and local government support. Students studying civic education have already experienced tremendous success applying their new knowledge and skills.

The Program Goes National

Begun in the first year as a pilot in 120 schools, *Foundations of Democracy* and *Project Citizen* have expanded to all 344 elementary (as well as corresponding satellite) schools in Macedonia. All Macedonian elementary school teachers have received in-service training on content and teaching methodologies for the civic education curricula. CRS

Students Lobby for Safer School Environment

Fifth-grade students at Kole Nedelkovski primary school made a difference in their community through the civic education project.

Their school is located behind one of the main open-air markets in Skopje. Because of a lack of parking space in the market area, vehicles were parking in front of the school and in the school-yard, creating serious safety concerns for the students and limiting use of the school's playground.

Through their work on the civic education project, the students identified the problem as an issue that warranted a community response. They invited a TV journalist to visit the school and present the problem as a news story. The students also met with concerned individuals, including the mayor of Skopje, and presented several solutions to the parking issue. The students' solutions were accepted: the pedestrian crossing and traffic signs on the main street near the school were repainted. The municipality also repaired the sidewalks in front of the school. As a follow-up, the students were invited to participate in city council meetings to discuss other community issues and concerns.

professional development of teachers. The U.S.-based CCE provides technical

organized these trainings, and BED advisors, along with select teachers, conducted the trainings after receiving training themselves from the CCE.

Civic education textbooks have been developed for students and teachers in kindergarten and grades 1-6 in the three main languages of instruction: Macedonian, Albanian, and Turkish. CRS published and distributed over 280,000 student textbooks and over 14,000 teacher guides free of charge to all program participants. In addition, a civic education textbook for grades 5 and 6 was developed locally by BED and published for 34,400 students with assistance from CRS. This textbook introduces the structure of Macedonian schools and local and national government, and supports citizen awareness, understanding, and opportunities to participate in public-policy decision-making. CRS complements these textbooks with a semi-annual civic education newsletter, *Civic Education Today*, distributed in three languages to all elementary school students, teachers, and parents in Macedonia.

What Have We Learned?

Stakeholders involved in the civic education program cite three key aspects of its effectiveness:

1. **Development of National Standards for Civic Education.** How can stakeholders build on what has already been achieved and make civic education an integral part of everyday practice in Macedonian elementary schools? The answer is to develop national standards for civic education. Since BED had limited experience in this area, CRS involved the

Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), an organization that specializes in developing education standards.

Experts from SQA visited Macedonia and worked closely with BED and CRS. Together they started the process for developing measurable standards on a national level for civic education and for providing tools for teachers to monitor and evaluate students' continued success in the subject area. These standards make it possible to assess what students learn and which skills and abilities they have acquired for civic life in the family, school, and wider community. The use of standards is still in the pilot phase, with plans for introduction at the national level by 2005. At that point, civic education will become one of only three subjects in the Macedonian elementary school curriculum with such standards.

2. **Institutionalization of Civic Education through Pedagogical Faculties.** A

key to the success of this project is that it has not been an isolated initiative, outside the mainstream education sector in Macedonia. CRS has successfully involved major stakeholders to ensure that civic education is institutionalized within the educational system. One way to achieve this is through exchange vis-

CRS Continued Support

"The experience we have gained from the process of developing standards for civic education will help us to develop standards for other subjects in the social and natural sciences. We would like to express our gratitude to CRS for its continued support through this entire process."

—Gorica Mickovska
Bureau for Educational
Development

All the Key Elements in Place

"CRS has put in place all the key elements for the sustainability of civic education in Macedonia: consultation with all the stakeholders, capacity building of its partners, and implementation by local indigenous groups, such as the Bureau for Educational Development and Parent Councils."

—Kathy Stermer
USAID/Macedonia Senior
Democracy and Local
Governance Advisor

A New Vision for the Future

"I think that through the implementation of Foundations of Democracy, the students and teachers will be enriched with new themes necessary for a democratic society. These themes were lacking in the time of communism. I believe that now that these generations have started to learn about democracy, they will know how to choose good and competent leaders, they will know how to solve problems justly, and they will have a new vision for the future."

—Macedonian teacher

its to other countries already implementing civic education as part of their pre-service curriculum. CRS facilitated two such visits—to Poland and the Czech Republic—for Macedonian educators, including representatives from the pedagogical faculties and BED staff. These visits helped influential Macedonian educators see how their counterparts in other countries have integrated civic education into the pre-service teaching curriculum. They also established professional links between these educators that will continue to play an important role in sustaining civic education as a core subject in Macedonia.

3. **Involvement of Multiple Stakeholders.** Successful introduction of a new element into the formal school curriculum requires the buy-in of many different stakeholders. From the beginning, CRS has made a conscious effort to involve BED staff, representatives from other segments of the MoES, university professors, individual teachers, students, PCs, international education experts, and USAID. CRS was uniquely placed to convene these diverse stakeholders because of its national level contacts with donors and government, and its local level contacts with communities and schools. No other partner—government, donor, or communities—maintained relationships at these different levels. Periodically, CRS has facilitated seminars to consult with these various stakeholders

on the strategic direction of the project. This has allowed all groups an opportunity to provide input into decisions. With the involvement of all stakeholders in this way, the project has enjoyed broad support.

Actively engaging parents was particularly important in reinforcing the idea of civic education outside the classroom. During project implementation, CRS held workshops for all 344 PCs to increase parents' awareness of what their children were learning and how they could support this learning. The mid-term review found that parents were becoming more involved in the life and work of the school as a result of this process. Parents were learning from their children about civic education and how to raise issues of importance to them.

Looking Ahead

The success of the civic education project to date has led USAID to extend the project for an additional year to ensure that work on standards and institutionalization has ample time to take root. In the project's final year, focusing on these two priorities is paramount to ensure that the impact on education in Macedonia is long lasting.

KOSOVO: PARENT TEACHER COUNCILS AS A POSITIVE FORCE FOR CHANGE



Kosovo has a unique history of community support for education. When Albanian Kosovars were marginalized

by the formal education system in Kosovo in 1991, they responded by establishing an impressive network of underground schools supported by local communities. Until 1999, with the escalation of violent conflict in Kosovo, almost all Albanian Kosovar students were educated in this parallel school system run out of private homes and paid for from a well-organized system of private contributions from parents and community members. This history of communities mobilizing to meet local education needs provided an excellent starting point for working in a more formalized manner with civil society groups.

Building on Community Support to Rebuild Education in a Post-Conflict Environment

When CRS began working in Kosovo in 1997, it decided to build on—and, over time, formalize—this strong tradition of community support for education. CRS started by training and strengthening individual Parent Teacher Councils (PTCs) in partnership with the Kosovo Foundation for an Open Society. These PTCs existed in name before the conflict but were not functional. Work with PTCs stalled in 1999 because of the war. When the conflict ended and the refugees returned, CRS returned with them. Soon after, CRS again took up its work with PTCs, viewing this as the best path to rebuilding shattered communities and schools.²⁵ Efforts were success-

ful, at least in part because there was a significant amount of money available to reconstruct and rehabilitate schools damaged in the war. Many in the international community were looking to ensure that parents and communities had a part to play in reconstruction, and PTCs became a critical vehicle for obtaining such input. CRS, though, saw far greater potential in PTCs than simply a short-term vehicle for reconstructing schools. In the agency's long-term view, PTCs could collectively form a vibrant group within civil society, capable of playing a key role in rebuilding Kosovo's education system.

PTCs Grow into an Institutional Force

Within a year after the end of the war, CRS was already working with 25 PTCs, offering training in areas such as organizational development and strategic planning and promoting awareness of curriculum reform efforts being undertaken by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the agency responsible for transitional governing of the U.N. protectorate. By 2003 the number had more than doubled: CRS was training and supporting 57 PTCs.

It was this reputation for working

What a Mobilized Parent Teacher Council (PTC) Can Do

The PTC in Vojnovc, Kosovo, offers an excellent example of the impact an effectively trained and mobilized council can have on a community. Internally displaced Kosovars who were turned back from the border during the 1999 conflict sought refuge in this village of 1,100. The PTC, which CRS had helped establish and strengthen before the war, put together an emergency plan and successfully accommodated 8,000 displaced Kosovars. It organized all available human and material resources in the village, distributing firewood to weaker members of the community and school supplies to children.

Spurred on by its initial success, the PTC broadened its activities in the post-conflict period to meet other community needs. It raised \$36,000 toward construction of a new road to link the village with the region's main road, 1.7 km away. Community members prepared a detailed proposal for the remainder of the funds necessary to complete the project. In recognition of the initiative shown by villagers, the World Bank donated \$75,000 to fund completion of the road.

²⁵ CRS' work with PTCs in Kosovo has been done through what the agency refers to as its Parent-School Partnership (PSP) program which has received funding from CRS private resources as well as a number of different donors, including USAID, UNDP, UNHCR, and UNICEF.



with PTCs throughout Kosovo that allowed CRS to become a key player in the education policy arena. UNMIK recognized the work being done with PTCs and looked to CRS to play a leadership role in making sure community involvement was institutionalized within the new education system. During the process of transferring power to a new Kosovar-led Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, UNMIK officials designed a two-person unit, the Division of Community Involvement in Education, within the new ministry and asked CRS to train individuals to lead it. While this nascent unit is still defining its role within the ministry, the fact that it is now functional is testament to a growing institutional commitment to the role of communities in rebuilding Kosovo's education system.

From School-Level to Municipal-Level PTCs

One tangible way this interaction between authorities and civil society is being fostered is through the formation of municipal level PTAs. A municipal PTA acts as an umbrella group provid-

Building the Capacity of Civil Society

"The impact that CRS has had in the communities we visited confirmed that they have played a very powerful role in building the capacity of civil society. This is an absolutely critical function of institutions like CRS that inter-governmental agencies are not as well-positioned to play because of their institutional relationships with authorities."

—Former UN official in Kosovo

ing support to multiple, school level PTCs that fall within its jurisdiction. A municipal PTA comprises at least one member from each PTC in the area. Support to individual PTCs consists of training for members in strategic planning and organizational development, fundraising for school reconstruction projects, photocopying of exams and school

materials, and assistance with conflict resolution in schools and communities with mixed Serb and Albanian populations. Municipal PTAs also serve a watchdog role, representing individual PTCs before municipal authorities and advocating for individual school needs.

CRS has gradually shifted its focus to building the capacity of municipal level PTAs, so that PTAs, rather than CRS, can provide technical support to individual PTCs. CRS has so far facilitated the creation of five municipal level PTAs and helped them register as official non-governmental organizations (NGOs). By facilitating the emergence of municipal level PTAs, CRS has created a space for diverse stakeholders and civil society representatives to contribute to local level, and eventually national level, education policies and priorities.

CRS works with PTAs to make sure their input is constructive and that PTAs do not duplicate the work of school boards. PTAs and PTCs neither function as parallel structures, nor see themselves in opposition to the official school boards established by UNMIK and endorsed by the government. Though PTAs keep school boards accountable by representing the concerns of parents and teachers, their relationships with municipal authorities and school boards have so far been positive. In fact, government structures are already recognizing PTAs as key players in the education arena. For example, PTAs in Lypjan and Ferizaj were invited by municipal education officials to formally participate in the selection process for new school principals in their municipalities. This is a significant accomplishment given parents' historical exclusion from government decisions.

Further evidence of PTAs receiving

greater recognition as legitimate partners in education comes from the World Bank's recent Education Participation Improvement Project (EPIP). Through EPIP, the World Bank has committed \$4.3 million to the Kosovo Department of Education (KDOE) to reduce student dropout rates. KDOE will host an open competition in which all school boards in Kosovo may apply for grants of up to \$15,000 each. It is anticipated that by 2006, when the grant ends, half of all Kosovar schools will have received funds through this mechanism. PTAs established by CRS have been identified as local watchdog groups that will oversee municipal review of school board-proposed projects. This ensures greater transparency in the distribution of funds and gives PTAs a certain legitimacy within the education system.

Once a national PTA is formed, it will have a vote on a national government panel to determine which schools are awarded grants. Until then, CRS has been given a seat on this panel with full voting rights. The fact that a PTA representative will be given a seat on the national board, alongside senior representatives from the ministry, UNICEF, and UNMIK, speaks volumes about the credibility and decision-making power PTAs have gained in Kosovo in such a short time.

Looking Ahead

It is critical to continue building the capacity of the newly formed municipal level PTAs so they can take on the role of providing support to school-based

PTCs. This will help secure a place for civil society partners in Kosovo's emerging education system. It is also important to continue monitoring the evolving relationship between PTAs and municipal authorities. Ensuring that this relationship remains constructive, and not competitive, will be key to securing the PTAs' proper place in civil society.

There is now a window of opportunity to begin frank discussions with the Kosovo government regarding this relationship. Toward that end, CRS has committed funding to support an initiative between PTAs and the national government. This will help to clarify roles and responsibilities between PTAs and school boards, address the long-term sustainability of PTAs, and plan for the development of a national PTA.

A fully independent and sustainable network of PTAs and PTCs able to advocate for educational quality is the goal of CRS and its partners in Kosovo. Evaluations thus far indicate that PTCs are aware of reforms taking place in the Kosovo educational system and many are actively overseeing the implementation of learner-centered teaching approaches in their schools.²⁶ The fact that PTCs are beginning to address issues of educational quality is a significant achievement, considering they are still grappling with everyday problems related to overcrowding of schools, lack of adequate heating, poor plumbing and sanitary conditions, inadequate teacher compensation and the lack of teaching and learning materials.²⁷ Moving PTCs farther along the continuum from concerns about school infrastructure to

²⁶ Universalia (2003), Catholic Relief Services Kosovo Education Programme: Mid-Term Review.

²⁷ Ibid.

educational quality will require more time and guidance.

Several other long-term issues also need to be addressed, including continued recruitment and training of members, funding, stewardship, networking, and relationship building. If PTAs are to emerge as credible, independent voices and powerful civil society watchdogs, they must become self-sufficient and sustainable organizations, fully supported by their constituents and without reliance on the reputation of international NGOs or the vagaries of international aid. Kosovo's PTAs have taken some bold and impressive steps in this direction, but they need to continue if they are to take their place as viable partners within civil society.

HAITI: THE RISE OF PTA FEDERATIONS AND GRASSROOTS NETWORKS

The achievements of PTAs in Haiti may appear modest compared with those of groups in Kosovo, but their progress given Haiti's volatility is promising. In Haiti, a fundamental challenge to institutionalizing democratic processes is that the vast majority of citizens continue to be excluded from basic civic processes that affect their everyday lives. Widespread lack of awareness of citizen rights and responsibilities, and limited understanding of self-governing processes, combine to preclude the majority of Haitians from being active participants in civic affairs. Further complicating this situa-

tion is that it is only through the genuine involvement of community groups and grassroots organizations in local, regional, and national decision-making processes that a truly democratic system in Haiti will emerge.

On a more promising note, Haiti's educational system provides a unique opportunity for community groups to participate in decision-making processes. With close to 90 percent of the nation's primary schools operated privately outside the MoE, new schools begun by independent entrepreneurs appear often. In this system, parents act more as consumers, free to send their children to any of a number of primary schools within their area. While demand for education among Haitian parents is high, however, these same parents typically regard schools as the exclusive proprieties of school directors and remain outside most decision-making processes. Parents have traditionally seen their role as simply sending their children to school, leaving what happens in school to the directors and teachers. This is now starting to change as parents come together to form local PTAs and become increasingly involved in school affairs, and as different PTAs begin to link with one another in grassroots networks to achieve common goals.



Evolution of PTAs and PTA Forums

CRS has supported a school feeding program in Haiti for many years. In the

1990s, with support from USAID/Food for Peace, CRS altered the program to include activities that address the quality of education. One activity included stimulating community involvement in education through the formation of PTAs. Initial steps in this process included sensitizing parents and teachers to the concept of a PTA and the role it can play in the life of a school, talking to school directors about the benefits of increased parental participation, facilitating democratic elections of PTA committee members, and enabling newly formed PTAs to effectively participate in decisions that affect the school.

After several years of working with PTAs in this manner, CRS has noted that the mentality of communities toward schools is changing. Discussions with parents, teachers, and directors in four separate communes indicate that community members no longer view schools as the exclusive domain of individual directors or the state, but as local institutions owned by the entire community. This represents a significant shift in thinking. As one parent in the commune of Saut-Mathurine noted, "In the past, we always just sent our children to school with the understanding that whatever happened after that was the school director's responsibility. This is now changing. We are becoming much more involved with what happens at school."

Teachers and directors in Saut-Mathurine schools confirm this, noting that parents now visit schools regularly, consult with teachers on their children's progress, help in the classroom with daily activities, and check on which children are absent and visit their homes to find out why. For

teachers, this is a welcome change. They say that not only are their roles as educators in the community affirmed by greater parental interest, but the burden of ensuring that children are in school and prepared to learn no longer rests solely on their shoulders.

As PTAs began to take root and flourish, CRS invested its own private funding to continue to strengthen them. Ten different regional forums were organized so that PTAs from the same commune could share lessons and exchange experiences. Before the forums were held, each PTA functioned in an isolated fashion. The forums facilitate grassroots networks and address the variation in levels of PTA motivation and activity.

Some PTAs are extremely dynamic and able to achieve impressive results, whereas others seem static and unable to accomplish much. Numerous focus group interviews with PTA members revealed that the main factor consistently present in effective PTAs, and missing in less-advanced PTAs, is a school director who is open to and encourages the PTA. One advantage of the forums is that they allow school directors to hear how a motivated PTA has tangibly improved a school. CRS sees the forums as essential as they

**Measuring Success:
PTA Rating Chart**

In addition to collecting data on attendance and enrollment of children in program schools, CRS also works with PTAs to monitor and evaluate their progress. The following rating chart was developed for this purpose.

Level I

- Establish PTA in the school
- Establish temporary committee made up of founding members

Level II

- Accomplish Level I
- Convene a general assembly of parents
- Democratically elect committee of seven to nine members
- Hold regular PTA meetings

Level III

- Accomplish Level II
- Elaborate committee status
- Form functional sub-committees (e.g., school health, school canteen)
- Participate in school activities
- Develop annual plan
- Develop and assess projects
- Seek project funding
- Initiate legal registration process

Level IV

- Accomplish Level III
- Manage small projects successfully
- Establish annual contribution among members
- Democratically elect or re-elect committee members every 1 to 2 years
- Develop multi-year strategic plan

establish and cement important links among PTAs in the same commune, a critical step that has led to the next stage: PTA federations.

Together, We are Stronger: The Case of Maniche

In the commune of Maniche along Haiti's southern coast, CRS organized and funded a forum for six PTAs in two consecutive years. After the second forum, PTA members decided there was so much value in collaborating that they agreed to form a federation to formally maintain contact. The objective of the federation is to help member PTAs become stronger by sharing ways to improve their schools and learning

Bonding for Books

In Maniche, PTA members from one school decided they wanted a school bookstore in the village. Parents were tired of spending money traveling to Port-au-Prince to buy textbooks. A local bookstore would allow the PTA to purchase books in bulk at a lower price per book. For parents with little means, access to textbooks at a reduced price, and not having to bear the cost of travel, meant that the parents could save money for other household needs. In addition, if books were available locally, teachers could be sure that all students would have the same textbooks.

The school, however, did not have any land on which the PTA could construct a bookstore. PTA members approached local authorities with their plans and were successful in convincing the mayor to donate land for the new bookstore. Once the land was secured, CRS helped the PTA to purchase materials for constructing the bookstore.

to address common problems together. Three representatives from each PTA (one parent, one teacher, and one school director) were elected to serve on the federation committee. This three-person delegation from each of the six PTAs makes up the federation committee.

The nascent federation in Maniche is having a positive impact on local schools. Recently, when one of the schools in the federation needed repairs for a dilapidated building, parents from the other five schools pooled their resources and contributed money for the sixth school. "In the past, this would have never happened," said a father from one of the schools that contributed money. "Now, we've come to

realize that, together, we are stronger. Each PTA used to work for itself, now we work for the good of the whole community. We recognize our solidarity as a federation and when one school needs something, parents from all the other schools are there to help."

A well-known Haitian proverb states, *min anpil chay pa lou*—with many hands, the load is not as heavy. The load is getting light enough for one parent to proudly state, "We no longer need CRS to solve all our problems. We have the capacity among ourselves. Our vision is for our federation to become an institution within the community, an NGO."

A Ripple Effect

The federation idea is catching on in Haiti. CRS supported the request of two other communes, Saut-Mathurine and Camp Perrin, to develop similar grassroots networks for their PTAs. CRS worked with them to develop statutes that stipulate how the federations will be governed. CRS then guided them through the process of submitting applications to be recognized as legitimate organizations by the Ministry of Social Affairs. Being accompanied by an international organization like CRS gives would-be federations a degree of legitimacy in the eyes of authorities. So far, three separate federations have been formed and have submitted requests for government recognition. It is expected that they will soon be recognized as official entities and form part of a growing movement in Haiti.

As the idea for grassroots PTA federations continues to spread and CRS continues to receive requests for sup-

port, existing PTA federations grow stronger through their involvement in developing new federations. For example, when the commune of Bainet asked CRS to help it establish a PTA federation, CRS tapped representatives from existing federations to serve as local experts. These representatives traveled with CRS staff to Bainet to hold a one-day workshop. Experienced federation members (both parents and teachers) provided advice to the various PTAs in Bainet and described the processes, challenges, and successes they faced in establishing their federations. One teacher from a PTA in Camp Perrin stood up during the workshop's closing remarks and said, "We should continue our dialogue with one another across communes. Members of PTAs in Bainet should feel free to write us letters and contact us with questions or for advice. We don't need to rely on CRS to always act as the go-between."

A New Awareness of Rights and Responsibilities

One of the motors behind the acceleration of PTA federations has been the introduction of civic education for PTA members. CRS recognized that if PTA members were more aware of their own rights and responsibilities as citizens, they might take more initiative to ensure their children's right to education and mobilize to meet other community needs.

With this in mind, CRS formed a partnership with the National Democratic Institute (NDI). NDI, which had developed a curriculum in Haitian Creole, trained facilitators to

lead civic education sessions for PTA members in the three communes in various stages of forming federations. A series of 16 sessions (about one per week) was held in each commune. Parents, teachers, and directors from the different PTAs in the commune attended, sharing and learning about important issues across communities. Each session presented a different topic for discussion, among them the state and territory; rights and responsibilities; national and local government; democracy; what it means to be a citizen; how the national parliament works; voting; the environment and its protection; population and its growth in the country; and migration within the country. The sessions were effective. In a session on voting, one participant exclaimed, "Now I understand what it means to be a citizen. Now I'll never sell my voting card to anyone."

For PTA members, these sessions have led to more advocacy for and activity in local school issues. According to one mother in Saut-Mathurine, "Before the civic education sessions, I did not know what *kazeks* (local authorities) and school inspectors did. Now I understand their roles. We monitor these individuals to make sure they do their job. And, we know which things are not the responsibility of local officials, the things we need to take responsibility for."

Community members agreed that understanding their own roles and responsibilities, as well as those of the authorities, contributed to a more collaborative spirit between authorities and citizens. This collaborative spirit is also having an impact beyond education. In Saut-Mathurine, PTA members have discussed environmental concerns, in

particular the amount of trash and deforestation in their communities, and how the community's well-being is affected. They organized clean-up activities and now ensure that community members do not cut down trees for fuel. These examples represent a significant evolution of PTAs and a clear sign of a growing awareness of rights and responsibilities among PTA members.

Looking Ahead: Linking PTA Federations Vertically

Given the lack of exposure to democratic processes among Haitian citizens, the PTA federations stand out as models that hold tremendous promise for strengthening civil society. Only a few years ago, PTAs had little or no experience in civic participation. Now they form federations with nearby schools, pool their resources, and successfully lobby local authorities to meet school and community needs. Given the dearth of models for constructive civic engagement in Haiti, these achievements are impressive.

In the absence of significant governmental resources for education, the model of PTA federations is a promising development. The approach is also sustainable. It requires relatively minimal resources for federations to meet and exchange ideas, challenges, and successes. As a result, the PTAs woven together in federations are more likely to maintain contact with each other long after CRS leaves. As these networks continue to mature, they potentially form a stronger, more vibrant civil society capable of contributing to education and other community needs in Haiti.

Of course, a strengthened civil society cannot function in a vacuum; dialogue and interaction with local and national government are required. For this reason, CRS encourages PTAs and PTA federations to routinely invite local authorities to meetings and to involve them in planning and specific initiatives. At the national level, CRS shares the PTA and PTA federation experiences at regular meetings with the MoE in the hope that it will build similar initiatives into its own national guidance for the development and functioning of PTAs. Reaching out to local and national authorities must continue if PTAs are to be encouraged and the model of federations to spread to other parts of the country.

REFLECTIONS ON STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY THROUGH EDUCATION

The cases from Macedonia, Kosovo, and Haiti reveal several key lessons.

- The involvement of local and national authorities is essential for legitimacy. In Macedonia, CRS worked closely with the MoE as only it had the authority to introduce and institutionalize civic education into the curriculum. In Kosovo, CRS worked with UNMIK and later the newly established MoE to ensure that nascent PTCs and PTAs received recognition as legitimate partners in the education sector. And in Haiti, CRS accompanied PTA federations through the process of formal recognition as NGOs and invited local authorities



“We no longer need CRS to solve all our problems. We have the capacity among ourselves.”

to PTA federation meetings and civic education sessions to secure their support.

- Fostering stronger links among various parent teacher groups helps break down the isolation of individual associations and creates a dynamic civil society network with the capacity to respond to and/or advocate for its own needs. In both Kosovo and Haiti, this approach seems to be leading to municipal level associations and federations taking more active, visible roles in supporting local level parent teacher groups while CRS transitions into a supporting role.
- Networks must be built from the bottom up if they are to be sustained. Moving too quickly from the establishment of local parent teacher groups to regional associations/federations without ownership from the members of local groups can result in regional associations/federations with little stability or credibility. More time should now be invested to ensure that members of local parent teacher groups understand the role of the association/federation and their relation to it.
- As an international agency, CRS often has the credibility to mobilize multiple, diverse stakeholders—communities, civil society, government, international partners, and donors—in pursuit of common goals. Macedonia is a good example of how this has been done. International NGOs should be cognizant of their often unique ability to play this important role and make a conscious effort to bring stakeholders together to achieve common goals.

- Cross-sectoral programs involving education and civil society should be encouraged, to allow for more natural, dynamic initiatives that truly respond to the needs of communities. Spending time trying to determine whether such programs fit better into "education" or "civil society" categories may be counter-productive.



FOSTERING PARTNERSHIPS TO SHAPE EDUCATION POLICY

*Case Studies from
VIETNAM, BURKINA FASO,
and SERBIA*

In recent years, it has become more common for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to share lessons from grassroots programming with national level decision-makers. This allows NGOs to represent local concerns in national discussions around education policy. It also presents opportunities to foster new kinds of partnerships and collaborative efforts to improve education.²⁸

CRS recognizes that, as an agency that links local level needs to national level agendas, it can play an important role in shaping policy and addressing the root causes of inequities in education systems. By bringing both global views and local understanding gained from working with indigenous partners to the policy table, it can help synchronize educational development efforts that meet the learning needs of a community and nation. To successfully carry out this challenging task, however, healthy partnerships must be fostered

among diverse local, national, international, governmental, and non-governmental groups involved in education at a variety of levels.

Several factors characterize healthy institutional partnerships. Ideally, all groups involved should benefit. Trust is essential, as is a mutual commitment to reaching shared objectives. Transparency and open dialogue are key so that partners understand their roles and responsibilities, and how to complement one another to have greater impact. Mechanisms for debate and decision-making should be in place so there are ample opportunities for local communities to participate in policy dialogue. All

CRS Partnership Principles

- CRS bases partnerships on a shared vision for addressing people's immediate needs and the underlying causes of suffering and injustice.
- All CRS partnerships assign responsibility for decision-making and implementation to a level as close as possible to the people whom decisions will affect.
- CRS achieves complementarity and mutuality in its partnerships, recognizing and valuing that each brings a set of skills, resources, knowledge, and capacities to the partnership in a spirit of mutual autonomy.
- CRS fosters equitable partnerships by engaging in a process of mutually defining rights and responsibilities in relation to each partner's capacity to achieve the goal of the partnership.
- In its relationships with partners, CRS promotes openness and sharing of perspectives and approaches.
- To foster healthy partnerships, CRS promotes mutual transparency regarding capacities, constraints, and resources.
- By building partnerships, CRS contributes to a stronger civil society.

²⁸ Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond, and Wolf (2002), *Evolving Partnerships: The Role of NGOs in Basic Education in Africa*.

of these factors lead to greater clarity on the goal of the partnership and how to work together to achieve it.

The following cases from Vietnam, Burkina Faso, and Serbia illustrate how CRS works to develop partnerships with other stakeholder institutions for education reform. These inter-institutional partnerships differ from community partnerships in that the goal is to foster public dialogue that leads to more equitable education policies. CRS' role in this dialogue is enhanced by the agency's long-standing commitment to the countries where it works, its access to resources for education programming, and its ability to share lessons learned from direct experiences implementing education programs through local partners.

VIETNAM: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN A CHILD-FRIENDLY NATION



Vietnam is often referred to as a "child-friendly nation" for its promising potential to reach Education for All goals by 2015. Yet despite

this characterization, children with disabilities are often excluded from the formal education system. (The reasons that Vietnam has over one million disabled youth include: limited access to basic preventative health care; road accidents; the heavy use of pesticides and

fertilizers; and the after-effects of war, such as the use of Agent Orange, landmines, and bombs.)

To improve the situation for disabled children, Vietnam's National Institute for Education Sciences (NIES) began to address inclusive education in the late 1980s. NIES is the institution accountable to the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) for developing new curricula and innovative teaching practices and assessments in Vietnam. Since the early 1990s, several international organizations (UNESCO, UNICEF, Save the Children Alliance, Pearl S. Buck, and CRS) have joined with NIES to develop community-based models of inclusive education. In addition to technical materials to orient and train teachers, an integral part of programming included instruction on adaptive methodologies, adjusting curricula for inclusion, and developing community-based support for children with disabilities. At the community level, activities included building awareness of the rights and needs of children with disabilities, coordinating community services, and training parents. All programming highlighted the need for and benefits of inclusive education, and has resulted in the creation of local support networks for disabled children.

Salamanca Statement

Vietnamese approaches to education for children with disabilities follow the 1994 UNESCO World Conference on Special Education Needs in Salamanca, where 92 governments and 25 international organizations endorsed inclusive education as "the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving education for all; moreover [regular schools with inclusive orientation] can provide an effective education system to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system."

—UNESCO

Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, 1994

First Step: Working from the Bottom Up for Inclusive Education

Between 1992 and 1996, CRS worked with NIES to pilot a variety of small projects to model and promote inclusion in preschools, primary schools, and vocational training institutes. In 1995, CRS began to build on and further explore ways to expand programming for inclusive education with support from USAID and MOET.

Through a USAID-sponsored Expansion for Community Support for

Teachers: The Key to Success

The mother of 10-year-old Phuong recounts how Miss Kien, a preschool teacher from Hoa Binh province, visited her many times and tried to convince her to send her daughter to school. Phuong could neither walk nor talk and her mother was hesitant to let her go, as she did not believe that her daughter was capable of learning. Finally Miss Kien convinced Phuong's mother to let her daughter attend classes. Miss Kien, working with community volunteers and rehabilitation workers, helped Phuong stand on her own and use some speech. Each day when Miss Kien comes by the house to accompany her to school, Phuong now yells happily, "Mama, the teacher is here!"

Children with Disabilities project in 1998, CRS began working in earnest with NIES on refining models of inclusive education and community support for children with disabilities in three northern provinces of Vietnam. This partnership included working on refining teacher training models and developing community models to strengthen inclusive education by linking education, health, and community support groups, such as women's and youth unions. Linking groups and supporting them with technical input contributed to a rapid

spread of interest in inclusive education. The project's mid-term evaluation in 2000 noted that:

- Disabled children were becoming full members of their communities;
- Each community surveyed was able

to point to specific ways in which public awareness of disabilities had improved;

- Training seminars and workshops helped improve education for all children in project areas;
- The project improved cooperation within the community; and
- The project had a positive influence on the lives of parents and children.²⁹

CRS, with assistance from other international organizations, helped create a groundswell of support for inclusive education. This was done through joint advocacy at the national level. At the community level, it was achieved by training teachers and raising awareness among communities. Trainings were held and materials developed to strengthen teachers' skills to academically and socially integrate children with disabilities into the classroom.

Community support teams were created (consisting of a health care worker, a women's union staff, a preschool teacher, and a volunteer) to involve a variety of key people in inclusive education. Also at the community level, Community Steering Committees (CSCs) comprised of local leaders, teachers and health officials mobilized community support, organized local training activities, and engaged in advocacy. In the Luong Son, Yen Khanh, and Yen Hung districts, project evaluators observed that CSCs were proactively securing adaptive equipment (e.g., wheelchairs and walkers) and providing tuition assistance for families. These committees also developed a Circle of

29 Ryan (2000), *Expansion of Community Support for Children With Disabilities: A Mid-Term Evaluation Report*.

Friends program for children to help disabled peers to and from school, as well as with academic and social activities. As a result, the number of children with disabilities enrolled in schools in program areas increased by 25 percent by December 2000.³⁰ The government responded favorably by making inclusive education a central component in the national ten-year education strategy.

Second Step: Partnership with MOET for National Expansion

In May 2001, at a national conference on education for children with disabilities co-hosted by MOET and CRS, MOET stated that inclusive education was the most appropriate strategy for educating children with disabilities and committed to developing a national implementation plan. Because of the established relationship between CRS and MOET, and CRS' demonstrated commitment to inclusive education, MOET asked CRS for assistance in making inclusive education a part of Vietnam's National Education Strategy for preschool and primary levels. Ambitious targets for inclusion of children with disabilities were set at the conference: 50 percent of all children with disabilities were to be included in school by 2005, and 70 percent by 2010.³¹

CRS supports the national education strategy by working with MOET to develop inclusive education expansion plans. Specifically, CRS helps to identify and train a core group of

MOET staff to work within governmental and educational institutions as technical advisors able to disseminate information on inclusive education throughout the country. Also, CRS has developed a multitude of teacher training programs in partnership with MOET, so that teachers can gain the skills and knowledge to work with disabled children at a variety of levels. CRS' support includes working with MOET and national teacher training institutes to create a mentoring system in which each teacher in the program works with an inclusive education teacher from outside the commune. These mentors provide technical assistance directly to each teacher and keep a record of challenges and good practices, which CRS uses to inform training. Finally, CRS and MOET are working on a policy to modify nationwide testing to accommodate disabled learners.

The Iterative Process of Policy and Practice

By working with NIES to create effective local models to support inclusive education while simultaneously working with government partners at the national level, CRS helps to ensure that policy and practice converge. This is an iterative process.

Today, there is greater national support for inclusive education. After witnessing successful program implementation at the community level, educa-



³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Nguyen Le Kahn (2001), *Forum on Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities in Vietnam*.

tion authorities at the national level are more committed to supporting policy reform. MOET developed a steering committee to define a policy on inclusive education, complete with indicators and targets. In turn, training resources and technical capacity to support inclusive education have been expanded. Finally, advocacy for inclusive education has increased, as evidenced by the appearance of articles on disability issues in the media.

This case demonstrates that developing and maintaining collaborative partnerships is essential for education reform. To respond to the needs of learners, these partnerships must also be cross-sectoral. Partners involved in the inclusive education project include NIES and MOET at the national level; health care providers and educators at both the local and national levels; CRS and other international NGOs; teacher training programs in Hanoi and within the provinces; and project participants at the local levels. It took partners working together at all levels, from school-based to the national level, to understand the benefits of inclusive education, to demonstrate good practices, and to subsequently initiate change in education policies. In Vietnam, CRS continues to learn how best to support national, regional, and local authorities to identify obstacles to inclusive education, to quickly and clearly communicate policy gaps in the implementation phase, and to eliminate such obstacles by working in tandem with communities and national education authorities.

BURKINA FASO:

BUILDING ON A LONG RELATIONSHIP

CRS has a long history of working at the national level in Burkina Faso. In 1960, CRS

became the first humanitarian organization to sign an accord with the government to assist in relief and development activities. Since then, the agency has consistently worked with national education authorities to tackle problems such as low enrollment and retention rates, particularly for girls. Because CRS is committed to staying in Burkina Faso beyond project cycle dates, it has successfully built and maintained a strong and respectful relationship with the Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy (MEBA).

CRS works in partnership with

MEBA to support a school canteen program using Title II funding from USAID/Food for Peace. In this food-insecure country, the school canteens offset opportunity costs that parents who send their children to school must bear. This, in turn, leads to increased attendance, enrollment and retention rates for children. Girls in particular benefit. Where girls received take-home food rations



A Mutual Interest

"Let's face it: we gain from each other. It [the partnership] would not happen if there was not a mutual interest."

—Anatole Niameogo
CRS education team member, in
reference to working with the
Ministry of Basic Education
and Literacy

for regular attendance, girls' enrollment increased by 27 percent in one year.³² Girls' and boys' primary school graduation rates are higher, and dropout rates lower, in program schools than in non-program schools.³³ Evaluators concluded that "CRS is making a real impact on decreasing gender inequities in Burkina Faso's education system."³⁴

A Collaborative Partnership

CRS' school canteen program in Burkina Faso is highly visible. As Mamadou Bagayoko, Head of Education at UNICEF/Burkina Faso states, "If you want to work on education issues in Burkina Faso, you have to work with CRS. They are an institution here. Everyone knows their work and respects it."

Because the canteen program is well known and because CRS involved MEBA in programming efforts, there is high national awareness of the program's impact. For this reason, discussions regarding education policy or reform often reference CRS' school canteen program as a model that works for raising enrollment and retention rates, as well as for increasing awareness of the importance of community involvement in education in rural areas. A combination of the extensive history of CRS in Burkina Faso, the food and technical resources the organization brings to the school canteen program, and the amicable relationship between MEBA and CRS has led to further opportunities to work in partnership at

the national level to improve access to quality basic education.

Currently, CRS and MEBA work jointly for two purposes: (1) to plan for transferring the management of the school canteen program from CRS to MEBA and (2) to build the capacity of MEBA staff so they are able to implement the program with the cooperation of local partners once it is transferred. The management of the school canteen program by MEBA is one of the strategies outlined in the *Plan Décennal de Développement de l'Éducation de Base (PDDEB)*, the government's decentralization plan for increasing access to education in rural areas.

Expanding Partnerships: Planning for the Transfer of School Canteen Management

CRS and MEBA are working together to transfer the management of the school canteen program as quickly and efficiently as possible. Both partners serve as technical resources in the transfer of the program according to the action plans in the PDDEB. Plans include jointly-sponsored national and regional forums to develop and communicate state policy for

Ministry of Basic Education and Literacy (MEBA) Supports School Canteens

Similar to neighboring countries in West Africa, Burkina Faso recently introduced the *Plan Décennal de Développement de l'Éducation de Base (PDDEB)*, a ten-year plan to decentralize the education system to allow for more commune and local level involvement in school activities. Within this framework, MEBA lists nine strategic directions to improve the education sector. Under the fourth strategic direction, to improve the quality and effectiveness of the basic education system, promoting government and community-run school canteens in rural zones is mentioned as a priority.

Impressive Work

"I was impressed by the leadership, integration, planning capacity, and collaboration activities of the CRS team in Burkina Faso."

—Emily Vargas-Baron
Director, The RISE Institute

32 Adelski, Bourdeau, Doamba, Lairez, Ouedraogo, (2001), *Final Impact Evaluation Report on Development Activity Proposal, 1997-2001*.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid

school canteens in rural areas. Other activities between CRS and MEBA include exchange visits to successful canteens, formal monthly meetings run by MEBA staff, and joint planning for the school year.

Another forum for discussing school canteens and other education priorities with a variety of partners—international and local NGOs, donors, and UN agencies—is the Technical and Financial Partners committee (PTF).

The PTF was created to coordinate donor funding and projects for education reform together with MEBA. The PTF led the design phase for the PDDEB's ten-year strategic plan objectives. CRS serves as a technical resource for the school canteen program at PTF meetings.

Expanding Partnerships: Linking Local and National Actors

MEBA staff work directly with CRS staff to gain hands-on experience in supervising the school canteen program. This allows for an easy exchange of information and provides MEBA staff with direct training on how to carry out such a program in a decentralized context. The arrangement provides both groups with daily opportunities to work together and allows CRS to better mentor MEBA staff in working with local communities.

Progress is good: MEBA now manages the school canteen program with CRS providing technical support. To further strengthen MEBA's management capacity, CRS and MEBA have

agreed to jointly design a canteen management manual based on lessons learned. The manual will provide guidance to local schools and parents' and mothers' associations for how to work together with district and national education authorities on school-level issues and school action plans. These actions help to strengthen partnerships at the local and national levels within the education system.

Respect and Dialogue

What is striking about national level discussions regarding education policy and reform in Burkina Faso is that diverse stakeholders are engaged in open dialogue.

Each organization is willing to discuss how it can best work with others to improve access to quality education for all.

Representatives from CRS, other international NGOs (such as Helen Keller International, Save the Children/USA, and Plan International), donors (such as the World Bank and the Canadian and Netherlands Embassies), and MEBA often attribute the cooperative working context in Burkina Faso to the "quality of the men and women" involved in the partnerships. Each expresses respect for the others based on trusting partners to accurately represent their interests. Although there are occasional exceptions, working together on activities helps build relationships and fosters a level of trust. CRS and MEBA staff



continue to learn how best to work collaboratively on transferring the management of the school canteen program. It is both challenging and rewarding for CRS to play a role in shifting this responsibility to national education authorities. Challenges include being part of a larger effort to decentralize the national education system. Rewards include seeing a rise in district-level education authorities' involvement in programming. The ultimate reward, of course, is seeing more Burkinabé children enroll in and complete school.

SERBIA: ESTABLISHING NETWORKS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT (ECCD)

Why ECCD in Serbia?

Education has been a sensitive and politically charged issue for American NGOs working in Serbia since the NATO bombings. At the primary level, in particular, international organizations are not involved in schools. At the pre-primary level, however, national authorities welcome the input of overseas groups in supporting independent preschools, given the disparity in attendance at this level. In wealthier communities in Serbia, preschool enrollment is as high as 90 percent, yet in other areas it is low or non-

existent, bringing the national average for preschool enrollment to only 32 percent.³⁵

Experience worldwide shows that children exposed to quality ECCD programs perform better than other children once they enroll at the primary level.³⁶ Good preschools stimulate children's cognitive development and motor skills between the crucial ages of three and six, while simultaneously enhancing their social skills. Supporting and promoting ECCD was therefore identified as a good entry point for CRS to begin working with the Serbian government to improve opportunities for preschool-aged children. ECCD provided a focal point for CRS and the government to start working collaboratively to create a more expansive system for preschool education. It engaged disadvantaged populations, built on current preschool education efforts, and ensured community involvement in national education initiatives. It also laid the foundation for creating a network of partners able to inform ECCD policy discussions.



Building on Research and Partnerships to Develop Policy

Working closely with the Serbian government and national education authorities, CRS began supporting non-formal preschool education that reflected the goals of reform defined by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES). CRS drew heavily on existing local research that highlighted the need to diversify the providers of and the funding for preschool education. The

35 CRS/Belgrade (2000), *Five-Year Education/PSP Strategy*.

36 Consultative Group on Early Childhood Education (1996), *8 is Too Late: Fact Sheets Created For the EFA-Mid Decade Forum*.

same research called attention to the need to encourage parents to enroll their children in ECCD centers. This research also served as a source for better understanding how community discussions may feed into policy considerations for MoES.

Facilitators

"CRS analyzed the current situation, consulted the right people, and helped everyone to better understand the context and where there is room for improvement before they designed a program."

—Mima Pešić
Professor, University of Belgrade

Seeing an opportunity to facilitate collaboration, CRS created a network for parents, regional educational authorities, MoES local and central level administrators, and other ECCD providers to discuss working together in partnership. This network is called the Awakenings Project.³⁷ It consists of four components that were coordinated to support the goals of the preschool education reform defined by the MoES: (1) increase parental involvement in ECCD; (2) build capacity of local NGOs for

CRS Builds Trust

"The CRS education program manager has knowledge, experience, and the ability to implement quality education programs. This builds trust. CRS is a good and efficient organization and we share the same sensibilities in terms of what we think needs to get done. They transformed their humanitarian assistance to development assistance at exactly the right time; this is great, because if they had not, then it would not have worked out."

—Refik Secibovic
Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education
and Science

ECCD; (3) support Montessori preschools; and (4) improve the quality of preschool education. Those involved in the Awakenings network come together and discuss their progress in CRS-sponsored regional meetings. As a result, parents and teachers involved in the Awakenings network demonstrate a much higher level of mobility, responsibility, creativity, constructive criticism and ability to solve problems.³⁸ The network serves as a resource for developing informed viewpoints on ECCD and implementing quality preschool education programs.

The Awakenings Project links local, regional, and national ECCD partners and advocates for national preschool support. Key to developing and maintaining the relationship between the project and national level education authorities was the fact that CRS worked closely with MoES and the University of Belgrade on ECCD activities. Through the Awakenings Project, an information ladder was constructed. Today, the MoES listens and responds to local input from parents, families, and preschool administrators and teachers. National policymakers now strive to make at least one year of preschool education mandatory for all children. School-level partners work with pedagogues and school directors in workshops and seminars with MoES personnel. Through the Awakenings Project, CRS has helped to bring community voices to national level discussions regarding ECCD.

Communication Up and Down the Ladder

When visiting CRS-supported preschools in Serbia, it is clear that parents, teachers, and administrators are well aware of what is happening at the policy level regarding ECCD. National level policies are debated and speculated upon in cafes and school meeting rooms. Teachers are well versed in teaching methods and speak of the benefits of ECCD for children. Principals and teachers, once in hierarchical relationships, in many cases now treat each other as equals and work together on common problems, then bring this dis-

37 CRS/Serbia collaborates with Save the Children/Norway on the Awakenings Project.

38 CRS/Serbia (2003) *Self-Evaluation Report*.

cussion to the regional level often through their newly emerging professional organizations. Organization and motivation for the support of decentralized education efforts are visible. From the local level up, there is a clear path to follow for getting community voices heard at the national level.

Moving in the opposite direction, from the national to the local level, it is clear that MoES is now open to discussing reforms in mixed groups of parents, teachers, and administrators. Traditional hierarchical lines of communication are beginning to break down. For example, the MoES now builds on the local and regional levels when developing by-laws, norms and standards for education reform. Parents and local organizations benefit from being included both directly and indirectly in these processes and from the growing number of preschools in the country. CRS-supported preschools and the Awakenings Project have also contributed to filling some gaps in alternative education opportunities. In general, people are motivated to change, to obtain new knowledge, and to listen to new ideas about ECCD.

It is interesting to consider that in the former socialist country of Serbia, where education was once considered the responsibility of the state alone, parents have quickly become involved in discussions about ECCD policy, an area not previously of concern. Parental involvement in national level education legislation was built into the process for informing policy level decisions, and this has given parents more leverage to decide, for example, which issues to discuss at national seminars on ECCD. In Serbia, strict attention to processes, informed technical input, and buy-in

from a variety of levels have all contributed to supporting a national movement for ECCD.

REFLECTIONS ON INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

There are two levels of impact to consider in institutional partnerships: immediate impact on policy and the ultimate impact on children. In all three cases in this section, CRS worked simultaneously with national and local education stakeholders as well as community members to link policy and practice. Each case demonstrates how successful practices at the community and individual level can inform policy directions for education reform. At the same time, changes in the national policies bolster support for community and school-based activities. The goal is to create a symbiotic relationship among the various groups involved.

Some of the lessons learned from CRS' experiences in Vietnam, Burkina Faso, and Serbia are listed below.

- Inter-institutional partnerships are strongest and most successful when formed to work on tangible and feasible issues of concern. In each country, an important education issue was addressed, based on the context and the strengths and value-added of each partner. In Vietnam, the need for inclusive education directed actions. In Burkina Faso, the school canteen program provided the focus for CRS and MEBA to define how to work together. In Serbia, ECCD provided an entrée to national discussions affecting

policy and reform. In each case, relationships were built around these tangible issues drawing from community input.

- In all of the cases, partnerships with other stakeholder institutions were focused on issues other than the core (and sometimes sensitive) subject of curriculum and its delivery. This points to the need for international NGOs to find acceptable entry points, particularly in sensitive environments, for contributing to a nation's education system.
- Defining roles in partnerships early on helps avoid problems later and reduces duplication in efforts. Keeping roles flexible in order to adapt to new challenges that arise is key. Partnerships that are adaptive rather than rigid work best.
- Respect and trust were essential for facilitating positive partner relations. For example, CRS gained respect from national level education authorities in Vietnam when the agency recognized the value of inclusive education and supported it with community partners. CRS' openness in dialogue and extensive knowledge of the history of education in Burkina Faso allowed partners to respectfully engage in a variety of topics. In Serbia, CRS gained the trust of national authorities by working with historic institutions and building on local efforts in ECCD. Because CRS often cultivates a variety of partnerships, it frequently has a broad base of well-developed relationships from which to support basic education.

- Good working relationships among international NGOs contribute to national level partnerships that can help to shape policy. If NGOs are well coordinated, they can speak with one voice and have a greater impact on policy level discussions.

Finally, it is clear that even with strong partnerships, it can be challenging to move ideas for education change and reform to the implementation stage, especially where civil society is not strong. Thus, it is important to remember that there is a complementary need to create demand for action in policy level initiatives at the community level. Local level input is vital for informing policy discussions. As an agency that can bring local and district partners into national level partnerships and discussions, CRS is well positioned to foster change. Without the participation of all stakeholders though, policy implementation will fall short of expectations.

Conclusion: Key Principles to Consider

We strive to learn from what we do – and to always do better. These case studies were undertaken with this in mind. They are not meant to provide the definitive answer to how to develop effective programs that achieve education for all. They are, however, intended to provide a glimpse into the complexities of how an international NGO works in partnership with stakeholders at different levels—community, civil society and institutional—to support basic education. The lessons pulled from these cases have been transformed below into principles for working in partnership at each of these levels.

Community

Fostering genuine partnerships at the community level requires more than simply encouraging communities to participate in discrete projects. Some key principles to abide by include the following:

- Spend time in cooperative planning exercises with communities during the initial phase of a project. This can help clarify roles while building the local capacity to sustain partnerships.
- Make long-term commitments to communities. Cultivating partnerships takes time. The mutual trust and relationships that develop and take root during this time provide the foundation for partnerships

where communities gradually take on more of a central role in supporting education.

- Expand partnerships to build more vibrant networks with greater impact. This can be done by building partnerships between and among different groups at many levels: community-NGO; NGO-NGO; NGO-government; government-community.

Civil Society

Education systems provide an excellent means by which to strengthen civil society. The following are key principles to keep in mind for forming partnerships at this level:

- Involve local and national education authorities. Nascent civil society groups (such as parent teacher councils) and new subjects in the curriculum need the involvement of education authorities for legitimacy.
- Foster civil society networks that have the capacity to advocate for their own education needs by building stronger links between and among groups, such as parent teacher associations.
- Allow networks to grow from the bottom up so that local (or school-level) civil society groups have a sense of ownership in regional or national associations. Invest time to ensure that members of local groups understand their relation to regional and national associations.
- Seize upon the unique potential of international NGOs to mobilize multiple, diverse stakeholders—communities, civil society, government, international partners, and

donors—for common goals. Invest time in bringing these stakeholders together to achieve greater impact on education.

Institutional

Cultivating partnerships at the institutional level involves working with a variety of stakeholders. Some principles are indicated below:

- Build inter-institutional partnerships that take into account the strengths and value-added of each partner.
- Find acceptable entry points, particularly in sensitive environments, for international NGOs to contribute to the education system. Often this will be outside the core issue of curriculum.
- Define roles in partnerships early on to avoid problems and reduce duplication, but keep roles flexible to adapt to new challenges that arise.
- Listen to the voices and concerns of communities and civil society and bring these to national level dialogue on education policy.

Final Thoughts

These principles are by no means exhaustive. They are put forth in the spirit of ongoing reflection about what it takes to make gains in achieving education for all. Partnerships are critical to this effort. But it is important to remember that partnerships—whether at the community, civil society, or institutional level—are pursued for an explicit purpose: to ensure that all children receive a quality basic education. With this in the forefront of our

minds, perhaps we will become better and more effective partners with one another.

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