# Development Projects That Work:
# Multidisciplinarity in Action

Globalhood Research Paper
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December 2007

## Introduction

When the concept of international development as we know it today was developed in the post-World War II era, the countries of the First World had 65 percent of the world's income with only 20 percent of its population, while the Third World was home of 67 percent of the world's population but have only 18 percent of its income.[1] World poverty was striking. In 2000, the World Bank estimated that about 4.5 billion people, or nearly ¾ of the world population of about 6.1 billion, live on less than US $2 per day, or below the world poverty line.[2] Global poverty continues to be a tremendous problem and the statistics today – almost half a century and hundreds of billions of dollars of international development assistance later – are no less striking than they were immediately after the war.

If international development means poverty alleviation, much still needs to be done – and, arguably, little has been accomplished. As the West continues to untiringly fuel the international development project by churning out volumes of plans and programs to accomplish what it has failed to accomplish for decades, it is apparent that the traditional approach and even the traditional definition of international development need to change. By looking briefly at the agenda for international development in the post-WWII period and offering several examples of development projects that have successfully accomplished the overall goal of development by improving the quality of life of their target communities, this paper aims to show that in order to bring about poverty alleviation, projects need to avoid the historically donor-driven and politically charged framework of traditional international development and instead be community-centered, community-driven, integrative, and multi-disciplinary.

*The beginning*

The concept of development has its origins in the industrialization of the 19th century, when it was used to mean the shaping of society around the economic and political changes brought on by the new modes of production. When applied to the colonies, development and the advancement of colonial societies were the ideological basis for foreign rule.[3] While the term was used intermittently in foreign policy into the early 20th century, the idea of development resurfaced and was given the meaning we are most familiar with today after the end of World War II. The world saw a global movement for peace and reconstruction driven by the industrialized countries of the West. International institutions like the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, and the International

[1] Philip McMichael, Development and Social Change: A Global Perspective, 3rd ed, 2003, Pine Forge Press, p. 22.
[2] G8 Global Poverty Report, 2000, p. i, July 2007. <http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/extme/G8_poverty2000.pdf>.
[3] McMichael, 2003, p. 3.

Monetary Fund (IMF), amongst numerous others, were created to assist Europe in its economic recovery from the war. While Europe rebuilt itself, the United States embraced its new position of global economic and political hegemony, and Europe's colonies started on a path towards independence. In its newly-found power, the US drafted a new foreign policy of international involvement for the advancement of less economically developed areas. In the words of President Harry Truman's inaugural address:

> We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate. They are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas… It must be a worldwide effort for the achievement of peace, plenty, and freedom.[4]

As the former colonies gained sovereignty and reconstruction assistance to Europe was no longer necessary, the US encouraged a shift in the focus of international institutions previously created to assist the reconstruction efforts towards the non-Western world. Western countries began to pool their resources to assist the poor: the IMF and World Bank began to make out loans to poor countries for the purpose of their economic and political development and advancement, the United Nations offered humanitarian assistance, and food aid was delivered to the world's hungry. This was the beginning of international development based in foreign aid and assistance from the West to the rest of the world.[5]

*The tradition of Western donor bias*

While ideally these efforts could have resulted in dramatic alleviation of poverty and economic development for much of the so-called Third World, today global poverty rates are still extreme and countless projects of international development have been widely criticized. The key to understanding development's failures – and to strategizing for its success – is its historical pro-Western donor bias.

A Western definition

As it can easily be guessed, the 19th century definition of development bore many negative connotations. Eventually closely associated with colonization, development was not merely the creation of formal political and economic institutions in colonial territories. Rather, it was accompanied – not unlike colonialism itself – by the Western belief that to occupy and colonize was to bring civilization to backward peoples and

[4] "Inaugural Address of Harry S. Truman," The Avalon Project of Yale Law School, 1997, July 2007 <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/presiden/inaug/truman.htm>.
[5] Peter Hjertholm and Howard White, Survey of Foreign Aid: History, Trends and Allocation, 2000, p. 10, July 2007 <http://www.econ.ku.dk/wpa/pink/2000/0004.pdf>.

societies.[6] Western domination of culture and resources was justified and considered to the benefit of both colonizers and colonized. The 20th century version of international development was likewise from the start burdened with an explicit political agenda. President Truman's inaugural speech reflected not simply an altruistic desire to help the needy of the world. The president was well aware that he was the new leader of the world's newest hegemonic power and that his role was to devise a foreign policy that would maintain the US in this position. The decolonization of the Third World and the increasing power of the Soviet Union and its communist ideology both posed a potential threat to the economic and political strength of the US – and the larger West.

While the former colonies worked to redefine development in terms of their own pursuit of sovereignty and social justice through industrialization for the substitution of imports and regimes based in participatory politics,[7] the US and its Western counterparts attached conditions to the foreign aid and loans they distributed to the newly-independent countries. These conditions have been a direct expression of the West's own definition of development.

The World Bank and the IMF used loans to promote the market politics of the US: to receive a loan, a country had to plan a project that would be approved by one of the institutions, then it had to make specific changes to its domestic economic and political structures in order to receive a loan. The policy requirements – or conditionalities – attached to the loans defined development as the achievement of an open domestic market, an export-oriented economy, widespread privatization, and a minimal state. This market approach to development is well illustrated in the World Bank's traditional use solely of a country's Gross National Product (GNP, also known as Gross Domestic Product, or GDP), or its per capita income, to determine its level of development.[8]

Alongside the work of lending institutions, the dissemination of foreign aid over the next decades was frequently motivated by the political interests of its donors – many critics would even argue that all aid has been politically motivated. Monetary assistance in the form of both loans and donations typically went only to countries with favorable political regimes and it demanded the development of economic climates that permitted foreign business and investment.[9,10] In addition, food aid, much of which was and still is supplied by the US (specifically agencies like the United States Agency for International Development, or USAID), was an opportunity for rich countries to rid their domestic markets of agricultural surpluses, another political and economic decision that has benefited the West. By doing this, they both stabilized their own economies by

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[6] McMichael, 2003, p. 3.
[7] McMichael, 2003, p. 19.
[8] The World Bank Group, "Glossary," DEPWeb: Beyond Economic Growth, 2004, July 2007 <http://www.worldbank.org/depweb/english/beyond/global/glossary.html>.
[9] McMichael, 2003, p. 47-48.
[10] Hjertholm and White, 2000, p. 11.

preventing price drops and undermined production abroad by creating a demand for US exports.[11] The direct result of this intervention has been a weakening of local economies by driving down prices for local food crops. Whether intentionally or unconsciously biased, the West's decisions about how and to whom to distribute aid put a Western spin on the definition of a worthy need while also attaching Western politics to the already political meaning of development.

*A Western design*

The second main reason for which international development in the 20th century has been perceived as driven by its financial supporters is that the Western institutions that provided the resources needed to establish and drive the international development movement were also the ones to determine its objectives and design its projects. This meant that the institutions behind international development planned their work according to the image of their Western donors and their own professional bias.

The US's signature pro-market and anti-communist ideology of the second half of the 20th century was directly reflected in the principles of the chief international development agencies it funded: the World Bank and the IMF based their lending practices entirely in neo-liberal economics, to use the examples previously addressed, while USAID used agriculture to promote global agribusiness and food and humanitarian aid strategically to assist US allies.[12] The institutional pro-market bias of these key agencies, in turn, was the skeleton of their development work.

Moreover, development projects were designed and implemented in a top-down, outside to inside manner as institutions generally did not seek to involve the communities they targeted in the creation of the projects that would affect them. Presuming that they knew what the developing world needed and how poverty should be fought, agencies' experts designed strategies for development from a distance. The governments of developing countries were involved in the implementation of projects but project designs and the use of foreign resources were not decided by the people who were supposed to reap their benefits. International development agencies have such a strong record of basing their work in their Western offices and expert groups that they have a long-standing reputation – which even they indirectly acknowledge today (see, for example, the World Bank website) – for working to assist communities by, in reality, ignoring their precise needs.

*Western money*

A Western design and a Western definition of development in the developing world are made possible by the fact that development projects are largely funded by the West. It is the West that has the billions of dollars and euros in contrast to which developing countries look poor, and it is this monetary might in the hands of the West that enables it,

[11] McMichael, 2003, p. 55.
[12] McMichael, 2003, p. 65.

be it purely altruistically or merely out of self interest, to designate pet causes, projects, and countries in which to invest surplus income.

From the perspective of a cynic – or a realist – the easiest way to serve Western interests or simply shape development according to Western standards is by controlling project funding. Or, if we are to doubt that development intentionally reflects Western interests, then it is common sense that a project that receives more money than another will do better than the other, at least in the short-term, because more money usually translates into a higher chance of survival. Then, if the sources of the money voice personal – or institutional – preferences for how they would like to see their money used, the project they fund – its design, its objectives, and its implementation – will directly reflect its financial background. Under either interpretation of intentions, it is entirely safe to say that donors naturally invest in projects that they – and not necessarily the recipients of aid – believe will help the developing world.

Western money means projects agreeable to the West, to donors, will be funded. In the realm of international development, Western funds have typically come from individuals and institutions that represent a different theoretical framework for development. They apply Western definitions of well-being, happiness, and progress in regions where these are both unfitting and completely insensitive.

*The results*

When put together, these tendencies of international development have resulted in tremendous spending on generally unsuccessful projects. Why international development has generally failed to help communities out of poverty and into lifestyles of economic and political security has already been explained in the last section, but here are a few more effects of the Western manner of approaching the field.

<u>One size doesn't fit all</u>: The main criticism that international development has been receiving for the past decade or two argues that projects fail to address problems of underdevelopment because they apply one formula to all problems, countries and peoples. The problem is as basic as the difference between what the West tends to call poverty and what is understood as poverty in countries internationally labeled as poor: while the West believes that prosperity is found through industrialization, Third World countries have large farming communities that are much more financially independent and self-sufficient than the average poor urban neighborhood in an industrialized country. To a certain extent poverty and prosperity can be conceptualized and visualized very differently in different parts of the world, and the criticism of the formula for international development often founds itself in this fact. Moreover, the formula applied by the West for the development of the poor has been based in capitalist, market-oriented economics as a fix-all. The prominent international lending institutions the World Bank and the IMF have been at the forefront of the implementation of market policies in poor

countries. Why has this one-size-fits-all approach been a problem? Because it is too often the case that Western international development actors and institutions develop a close-minded, very limited, and consequently usually messy and harmful understanding of the most pressing, true needs of communities. This has, in turn, limited their ability to address these needs in practical terms (and this is regardless of whether or not these agents are interested in developing greater understanding of their recipients). Cutting social welfare programs, reducing education funding, privatizing all national industry, and opening domestic markets to the effects of free trade, to name several components of the traditional formula for development, are not always positive policy changes for a country. In fact, as the voluminous writing on the World Bank and the IMF proves, they can be incredibly harmful and unsettling for poor, politically and socially unstable countries, causing long-lasting economic crises and political and social unrest.

Detachment: When the goal to develop the world according to Western standards met the strategic interests of aid donors within international development agencies and institutions, international development became a series of projects designed by planners working outside the developing world and the communities their work would affect. And in many cases in which project planners worked on location, in developing communities, their Western understanding of their work's objectives made it so that they may as well have designed their projects at home. This traditional ignorance of local historical economic, political, and social context for new development projects has, very unfortunately, if not exacerbated at least reinforced many problems in developing countries. These include, but are not limited to, government corruption, gender imbalances, and social and economic inequalities.

Dependency: Most international development work is not only designed and funded by foreigners, it is also implemented by them on the ground, with little, if any, local participation in the process. The typical Western assumption is that people can be told about a development project and given instructions for how to change their lives to fit the project, and that they would in turn just gladly accept the project as it comes without questions or comments. When communities are perceived as subjects without the right and the knowledge or wisdom necessary to understand their own problems and participate in the brainstorming and implementation of solutions, the less likely they are to become engaged and feel responsible for the outcomes of projects. This detachment from international development work sends the message that the developing world is incapable of helping itself, and that it is dependent on the ideas, expertise, and financial resources of the West for all and any positive change. In a community that is heavily dependant on outsiders for its development, one can find many persons who have a dangerously low sense of responsibility for and ownership of their community's future and well-being. This has been especially harmful when the numbers include figures of power whose duty is to provide for the people economically and politically. In countries already suffering from high levels of corruption and government unaccountability, politicians should not be given another excuse to sit pretty and look the other way.

Shame: Lastly, it is necessary to state that, like any other international action, intervention by foreigners to directly challenge and redesign a country's political and economic system has, in any given case, its local supporters. And intervention under the auspices of development can have stabilizing effects for the target economy and political institutions by providing an outside expertise and funding for projects that would otherwise be unfeasible. But it is also important to remember that foreign intervention is generally perceived negatively by many countries and peoples around the world. One of its negative effects is a sense of shame and backwardness in many of those on the receiving end, especially when foreigners arrive with the explicit belief that their duty is to civilize the world's poor countries, as has been the case with Western agents for international development. This shame brings locals to discredit their own culture and historical ways of living. While this may not seem like a significant problem if there is overall improvement of a community's living conditions, when shame of this kind accompanies an international development project that has been not only funded but also entirely designed by foreigners, as such projects traditionally have been, many communities become highly discouraged from coming up with their own solutions to their own problems. Members of villages, city neighborhoods, and entire political regimes succumb to the traditional belief of international development agencies that they cannot help themselves and that only the West has the right answer and the money to make anything happen.

*An alternative model*

Many would say that it is easy to criticize a finished thing and much more difficult to offer an alternative. How can the negative aspects and effects of international development be reduced so that international development can truly help those it means to help? The traditional model basically has to be flipped, turned upside down, and rooted in principles and dynamics almost exactly opposite of those that have defined international development since the 1950's. International development must be approached with respect, understanding, generosity, and humility, while the top-down model has to become much more bottom-up.

If international development is for the benefit and in the best interest of the developing world, then the developing world has to be permitted an active role in it. It is fair and fine to give advice, to teach, and to contribute to the physical means of accomplishing the goal of development. What needs to be taken out of the equation are the West's colonial attitude of superiority and conviction that no one knows better. In order for positive change to take place, the people have to first realize that change is necessary. Then they must figure out for themselves how they are willing and able to help and change themselves. With local leadership and creativity, the pressing needs of a community can be translated into projects and addressed as is most suitable for that community. Projects must be more coherent and communities more cohesive, and international development

must be allowed to be for the developing world, by the developing world. Development must not be defined simply as economic growth because we have seen how problematic this approach has been. Just as societies are multi-faceted and complex, whether they are wealthy or poor, so must be the manner in which international development approaches the Third World and conceptualizes the needs of its underprivileged populations. If we can respect a Western individual's freedom to decide what kind of dwelling, employment, or food makes him or her happy, we must also respect and allow the developing world more say in its own future and fate.

No one could walk into a business entity, with even the highest professional credentials and accomplishments under arm, and be allowed to run that business and make all of its major decisions without first demonstrating thorough understanding and acquaintance with at least its history, product, strategies, and partnerships. Typically, a new chief of a business enterprise would also have already had direct contact and involvement with the business before coming into a decision-making position there. A demand for involvement without at least some background would be perceived as arrogant and the hiring of someone without this background experience would widely be considered an unhealthy business decision likely to bring problems to the entity in question. If it is widespread belief that businesses must be treated with such care and caution, is not similar caution for the future of other countries and peoples also our duty? Just as a business can, and is, perceived and handled carefully as a multi-faceted, fragile institution, so must be the development, progress, and well-being of a poor state or community. International development has a duty to its targets to understand and approach their economic state with the complexity it requires to be understood and taken down a positive new path.

First and foremost, international development workers must represent more than just the discipline of Harvard and Chicago-school capitalist economics. They must come from an array of backgrounds that will provide eyes and ears as multi-faceted as the communities to be addressed. Then to learn about them, international development workers must study underdeveloped communities first-hand and observe their daily lives. To understand them, they must interact with individuals and groups within the communities who represent varied backgrounds, positions, and opinions. To work with them, development teams must involve aid recipients, especially those already in positions of grassroots leadership within their communities, in the planning and implementation of development projects. This is probably the easiest and cleanest way to secure participation and, hopefully, satisfaction. Lastly, to ensure long-lasting, far-reaching, fair development and benefits for the community or country in question, development teams must transfer ownership, responsibility, and maintenance of projects to local communities and institutions by developing local expertise and local funding mechanisms.

The following two projects break away from the traditional approach to international development, and while they are by no means perfect examples of the multi-disciplinary

community-based development, they take important steps in the right direction. Major lessons can be learned from both their successes and their weaknesses.

## ***CASE 1: Gassinski Model Forest, Nanaiski Raion, Far Eastern Russia***

*Background and foundations*

In the far Eastern corner of Russia, bordering the northern-most edges of China, is the state ("krai") of Khabarovsk. Tundra and forest surrounding windy rivers, the state has historically relied on its timber and fishing industries for economic sustenance. The Nanaiski region ("raion"), located in the northern parts of Khabarovsk krai, is an area of 22,000 square kilometers and approximately 20,000 inhabitants, a fourth of which are indigenous, that is also economically dependent on the timber and fishing industries. A resource-producing territory for the Soviet Union, the raion's main source of revenue under the communist regime was the export of raw logs. Throughout the second-half of the 20th century, timber extraction here meant aggressive harvesting and frequent forest fires, while the fishing industry overfished some of the area's rivers.[13] The resulting environmental damage was coupled with a little infrastructure and social services, and when the post-communist democratic system brought drastic market reforms for the national and regional economy, the people of Nanaiski suffered tremendously. Unprepared and untrained for the new economic reality, they were especially hurt by the collapse of the ruble in 1998: most of the raion's 22 logging companies ceased to operate, and the raion had an unemployment rate that, also including the under-employed as well as those not receiving salaries, was around 60 percent. The indigenous populations of some of the raion's small villages were brought to bare subsistence under unemployment rates as high as 100 percent.[14]

In the early 1990's, the Canadian Model Forest Network (CMFN) offered its resources and expertise to the Nanaiski raion, and established a Canadian-Russian partnership that founded the Gassinski Model Forest. The CMFN's goal is to promote Sustainable Forest Management, or management that maintains the health of forest eco-systems through long-term ecological, economic, social, and cultural opportunities for those who are economically dependent on forests. The practical applications of Sustainable Forest Management are the so-called Model Forests of Canada. The CMFN describes a Model Forest as:

[13] McGregor Model Forest Association, Natural Resource Based Economic Development Project in the Nanaiski Raion of Khabarovsk Krai, Russia: Final Report. 2004, p. 3, July 2007 <http://www.resourcesnorth.org/russian_activities/pdf/Final-Report.pdf>.
[14] McGregor Model Forest Association, 2004, p. 4

A partnership of public and private landowners, government, industry, universities, Aboriginal communities and other organizations that have a common interest in achieving Sustainable Forest Management within a local, defined forest area. Each Model Forest is run by a not-for-profit organization and, except for a small administrative staff, all those involved in the Model Forest not only donate their time and expertise, but also often bring additional financial support. At the heart of each Model Forest are the partners who work together to promote forest management that takes into account ecosystem health, cultural values and economics.[15]

There are over a dozen Model Forests in Canada and just as many countries have applied the concept to their own forests.

Source: McGregor Model Forest Association

The Gassinski Model Forest was the first of its kind in Russia. As a new idea and a project sponsored by a Western organization, its goal to create a plan for timber extraction from the Nanainski raion in post-communist far eastern Russia that would both minimize harm to the forest and meet the economic needs of all parties involved was ambitious. A scarcely populated region isolated by climate and geography in a corner of the world that few even realize exists, Khabarovsk krai has received little foreign assistance beyond money for reforesting and no international development projects have ever focused on the krai's villages. Without previous trials to show the errors to avoid, there was certainly potential for another disappointment of international development.

The project started off by bringing together representatives of all groups dependent on the forest and its resources. Government officials, timber industry members, and local village residents, especially members of the Nanai and Udege indigenous tribes

[15] Canadian Model Forest Network, "FAQ," Official Website, 2007, July 2007 <http://www.modelforest.net/cmfn/en/faq/>.

historically considered the owners of the raion's land, were allowed to voice their needs. In 1994 a Three-year work plan was written, and after numerous meetings, visits, and cultural and expertise exchanges, the Canadian and Russian planners of the Gassinski Model Forest project outlined a plan with specific measures for the economic development of the area. This plan has been the most tangible body of international development work completed in the raion.[16]

*Project objectives*

Devised with the expert assistance of the Canadian Model Forest Network and the Canadian International Development Agency, the Natural Resources Based Economic Development Project in the Nanaiski raion was started in 1997 with the goal of increasing the area's economic opportunities and the market appeal of its products.[17] The specific objectives of the project were:

1. "Development of value-added wood processing capacity": The raion has traditionally sold and exported its wood as unprocessed timber. The planners of the Model Forest project promote the development of a local industry for the production of wood products, such as window frames, cabinets, chairs, tables, and wood-frame houses, with the goal of beginning to substitute imports with local products.[18]

2. "Development of non-wood forest products enterprises": The raion's forest is rich in crops ranging from mushrooms and herbs to fish and honey that can bring substantial revenue but have never been marketed. This element of the project seeks to provide foreign expertise and equipment for the packaging and development of marketing strategies for unique local products with the goal of selling them both on the local market and to foreign business travelers passing through Khabarovsk airport, the third busiest international airport in Russia.[19]

3. "Development of a regional tourism strategy, infrastructure and enterprises": To establish a regional tourism association that would organize and promote excursions including fishing, cultural, and wilderness exploration amongst.[20]

4. "Development of commercial projects between Canadian and Russian indigenous people": The underlying idea is to use the already established relationship between the Lheidli T'enneh Bank of Prince George, British Columbia, and the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North in Nanai to come up with a plan to market of Nanai

[16] Gassinsky Model Forest Association, "History of the Establishment of the First Model Forest in Russia," Official Website, 2007, July 2007 <http://www.gassi.khv.ru/MLG/history_e.htm>.
[17] McGregor Model Forest Association, 2004, p. 4.
[18] McGregor Model Forest Association, 2004, p. 7.
[19] McGregor Model Forest Association, 2004, p. 14.
[20] McGregor Model Forest Association, 2004, p. 20.

crafts in Russia and Canada and to develop a smoked salmon enterprise in the Nanaiski raion that would make a product of quality attractive to Western consumers.[21]

5. "Creation of specially protected areas": Closely related to the goal of developing the local tourism industry, the purpose of this element is to create a national park within the raion that would preserve its rare fauna and flora while also restricting the future exploitation of the area's natural resources. This national park would be the first in all of Pacific Russia.[22]

*Outcomes*

1. During the first two years of the project, training for the processing of wood and creating of wood products proved a challenge. On the one hand this was because locals were at different skill levels and, on the other, because locals and, more specifically, business owners had to be convinced of the benefit of new equipment and of establishing an industry for wood products.

The first challenge was overcome mostly through the commitment of the project's managers to training, while to reinvent the thinking of local producers was much more consuming of time and effort. Convincing enterprise managers to invest in new equipment was not as successful as the project planners would have liked it to be – the managers had never used the kind of equipment the Canadians showed them and did not believe that their old processes for handling wood needed to be transformed so dramatically. Also, teaching Russian managers that the framework of government-planned business engrained in Russian society through decades of communist politics is outdated and harmful to business was more difficult than the project planners seemed to have anticipated.

Project reports indicate that the slow integration of new kinds of equipment and business ideas could have been more successful than the attempt made to change all local production methods within the first year of the economic development project. The Russian project participants would have been more accepting of the foreign ideas if their own traditions, even if economically inefficient or unsound, were not immediately labeled as such and rejected by the foreigners. As can be inferred from the general critique of historic trends in international development presented at the beginning of this paper, the Canadian model would probably have been accepted more readily also if training was organized and performed with more local participation. Foreign expertise could have become local expertise through the training of only one or two willing individuals native to Nanaiski who then apply their newly-acquired skills to the training of other locals with only some, if any, additional assistance from the Canadian project managers. It is likely that locals would have been more readily accepting of the foreign

[21] McGregor Model Forest Association, 2004, p. 29.
[22] McGregor Model Forest Association, 2004, p. 35.

production methods if they had learned about these from trusted figures in their own communities.

In the end, the value-added element of the economic development project produced notable results. Dozens of locals were trained in value-added wood processing and became an asset to their communities, making production efforts possible and providing continuing training to others in Nanaiski interested in making wood products. Very importantly, two entirely new wood processing enterprises were started and were able to market their products locally. The communities have gone from the practice of logging and sales of raw timber to China to manufacturing beds, tables, chairs, workbenches, sealed windows, doors, kitchen cabinets, house flooring, and complete wood-frames buildings. The transition to this new kind of business has significantly increased employment opportunities for Nanaiski village residents: most notably, after years of holding only part-time, seasonal jobs, many locals now have year-round employment in the timber industry. In addition to higher levels of employment, the local economy is also benefiting from the new capacity of the raion to satisfy its own demand for wooden household products and minimize imports and the expenses associated with them. Lastly, the government of the Khabarovsk krai has adopted the Canadian wood frame building code introduced to the raion by the project managers as a model to use in the construction of new housing for the area. It is hoped that emigration from the Russian Far East will be stemmed by the resulting increase in economic activity and improved housing conditions.[23]

2. The initiative to promote economic activity with non-wood products from Nanaiski consisted mostly of business training sessions and consultations with indigenous groups from Canada about specific and successful marketing techniques. Studies of the Nanaiski forest were performed to identify natural products that could potentially be harvested, processed, packaged, and sold by local residents.

Similarly to the value-added element of the project, this initiative encountered challenges in transforming the economic thinking of its audience. Having grown up in a non-capitalist system, villagers initially found it difficult to develop practical business plans that would be applicable to their communities and resources. Perhaps because the business training focused on how to establish new businesses and entrepreneurial initiatives – and not on how to change old businesses into more successful entities – the Russians trusted and became more invested in the foreign model here than in the previous initiative. It is possible that the Russian attitude towards this part of the economic development project was more positive from the start also because the initiative showed locals that there is brand new economic potential in their communities and thus allowed Russians ownership of the products from beginning to end. Instead of shaming them for

[23] McGregor Model Forest Association, 2004, p. 13-14.

having outdated enterprises and business ideas, the initiative gave them pride in creating something entirely new and beneficial to their communities. In any case, those who participated in the business trainings at one point or another – the number of participants quickly climbed to around 250 by the end of the first year of the project – learned quickly and began to invest significant effort into the development of products, promotion methods, and the small businesses necessary to sell them.

More specifically, a few new products were created and successfully marketed, and a number of economic development institutions were either established or boosted with the aim of providing support for local entrepreneurs and small businesses. Locally harvested and roasted pine nuts proved a popular item to export to the Japanese market; birch juice was sold on the local market; birch sap was extracted for export to Japan using Canadian equipment that increased tapping efficiency by extracting more sap from fewer trees; and fiddleheads and fir oil, both traditionally used as remedies, were harvested and sold in greater quantities and to a wider market. Indigenous communities organized bazaars for local products, over 30 new businesses were started, a third of which are owned and operated by indigenous residents of the raion and sell traditional indigenous products, and small businesses began to target tours of foreigners in the area as a market for their unique goods. In addition, two new entrepreneurial organizations were founded: a local version of a chamber of commerce to enhance communication and networking amongst small businesses, and the Enterprise Development Fund as a local source of expertise that would provide entrepreneurial and business training as well as small-business workshops on topics like how to operate community credit unions.

Even though the non-wood forest products marketed by Nanaiski villagers as result of this initiative are not incredibly lucrative or widely consumed outside the local market, the project has been able to give the raion invaluable training and expertise in small business and the management of local enterprises. Dramatic changes in local attitudes toward business have been observed and locals are seen taking greater charge of their economic future. It is this development that is one of the most important outcomes of the entire project in the Nanaiski raion, because it is their own sense of empowerment combined with newly obtained practical business skills, not the mere intervention of foreign experts with large sums of foreign money and foreign ideas, that will enable the people of the raion to achieve development.

3. The tourism initiative began with a survey of existing tourism opportunities in the area and an analysis of the potential for new development in the field. From the start the Canadian team experienced local resistance to the idea of a tourism industry that is not operated and regulated by the government, and they also found that Russians were highly hesitant about disclosing information about existing tourism programs. On top of the obstacle that was the cultural differences between the project planners and Russia, the cost of travel to the Russian Far East was high and the region was generally perceived

negatively as isolated and culturally and economically stagnant. These were issues that the program managers were not aware of before their arrival in the raion, and they became the main reason for the modest magnitude of tourism developments resulting from the implementation of the economic development project.

Despite the encountered difficulties, the initiative formed a team of Russians who were trained in specific elements of tourism during a number of trips to Canada and indigenous communities there. In addition, a Canadian research team wrote a report on the current state of Russian tourism with many prescriptions for policy changes and submitted it to Russian government officials. To make Nanaiski and Khabarovsk more noticeable to global and regional travelers, the Canadian training team assisted locals in using the tourism model of Russia's Lake Baikal, which has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site, to create their own and to eventually help in the creation of Baikal tours that would include the Nanaiski raion as an additional stop or a stopover on flights.

So far the Russian government has shown commitment to implementing the policies suggested by the Canadian research team and it is expected that tourism in the Nanaiski raion will be a much easier and much more attractive venture. There has also been progress in the plan to link Lake Baikal and Khabarovsk krai in travel tours. On the more specific local level, tourist brochures for the raion were created and distributed to regional travel agencies, including those in the city of Khabarovsk, Nanaiski villages have been integrated as stops on river boat tours, and five Khabarovsk travel agencies now work with indigenous households to provide homestays for tourists. The raion has also successfully promoted forest hunting as a tourist attraction.

The modest outcomes of the tourism initiative show are proof that international development projects need to be based in the communities which they hope to help in order to achieve their goals. It is not until foreign project planners are on the ground in their target communities and understand the context in which they have to work that they can plan an initiative that can be implemented and bring benefits to locals. An important positive aspect of this initiative is that after its planners encountered the mentioned local obstacles, they redesigned the initiative to fit the actual possibilities of the raion and the krai, and the small fruits of the project have become groundwork for future endeavors in the tourism industry.[24]

4. The two main ideas for business under the indigenous business initiative were to develop a local handicrafts industry and produce smoked salmon. A group of Nanai was taken to indigenous communities near the McGregor Model Forest and shown Canadian indigenous products and given business training with a special focus on entrepreneurial initiatives of the First Nations of Canada. Through such visits the indigenous groups of

[24] McGregor Model Forest Association, 2004, p. 23-29.

Russia and Canada were not only able to exchange business ideas and practical skills; they also had the valuable experience of cultural exchange. For the Russian group it proved especially important to see indigenous communities similar to theirs pride themselves in their culture and traditions and, at the same time, find ways in which their culture can sustain them economically.

During the course of the project, the Model Forest team and the Nanai of Nanaiski raion worked on establishing handicrafts shops and a smoked salmon industry. Handicrafts picked up momentum and the overall strategy of the planners was to build a relationship between indigenous shops in Russia and buyers in Canada. To help the Nanai pursue this venture, the First Nations group in Canada reserved a place for the Nanai in the Canadian Aboriginal Trade Show, a key venue to display indigenous products and find buyers. It was hoped that orders for handicrafts from Russia can be placed in Canada, filled in Russia, then exported to Canada. Although there was some demand for Nanai products abroad, it was quickly apparent that export costs were too prohibitive and the planned venture between Russia and Canada could not happen. This was not the end of handicrafts production in Nanaiski raion, however, and the project initiative should still be considered a success: trained in business principles by the Canadian project team, the Nanai applied their newly-acquired skills and began to market their crafts at tourist boat stops as well as to organize village and city handicrafts bazaars where they could show their traditional products to locals as well as tourists. Close to 200 people received business training during the first three years of the project, and about a dozen new businesses were opened within the Nanai community following the training. Overall, employment rates amongst the indigenous Nanai population rose very impressively from around 20% to 60%.[25]

The smoked salmon initiative, like the Canadian-Russian business venture, also did not materialize. By the beginning of the project for economic development, the salmon in the raion's rivers was in very limited supply, making regular fishing of large quantities of fish both environmentally unsound and immediately impossible. In addition, a second factor that contributed to the failure of the venture was that the salmon available in the rivers of Nanaiski raion is considered low-quality salmon by Western consumers.[26]

Like the previous initiatives, the indigenous business initiative could have experienced fewer failures and disappointments if more groundwork had been carried out before the actual initiative was implemented in Nanaiski raion. That said, however, this initiative, too, had a very positive impact on the raion's indigenous population by promoting a community-centered entrepreneurial spirit. After the business training of locals, the project team organized a traveling sequence of workshops and classes on Nanai history, culture, and traditions taught in by a Nanai. Perhaps more than the business training

[25] International Model Forest Network, Factsheet: Gassinski Model Forest, 2006, July 2007 <http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-99188-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html>.
[26] McGregor Model Forest Association, 2004, p. 29-34.

itself, it was these classes that empowered and encouraged the raion's indigenous population to pursue opportunities for economic development both within the framework of the Canadian project and outside of it, for the more general long-term sustainability of the community and its traditions.

5. The goal of the national park initiative of the economic development project was to designate a certain area of the Nanaiski raion's forest as a conserved protected area. This would be the first national park in Russia, and it would be a practical realization of the strategy for the sustainable economic growth of the region. This conserved home for regional flora and fauna would curb forest exploitation and logging while becoming a nature destination for locals and tourists.

The work of the Canadian team began with the collaborative preparation and submitting of a proposal for the creation of what would eventually be the 400,000-hectare Anyui National Park. The plan had to be approved by the krai's governor and passed on to the country's central government for second approval. Due to bureaucratic obstacles and changes in the organization of the Khabarovsk krai government, it was over three years before the project received the necessary political support and government stamps of approval. During this time, the Canadian and Russian project managers designated a Russian manager for the future park, and the Canadian team purchased park photography and video equipment. To help the public understand the concept of a national park and take on the responsibility entailed in having and maintaining the large designated area, the project leaders led a series of workshops to raise local awareness of the project and to teach environmental principles.

Although the first steps towards creating the actual park were not made until after the completion of the project for economic development, the national park initiative was nevertheless successful. The park was created with widespread government and local support, and it not only still stands today but has also inspired officials to seek permits for the designation of other areas of Russia as national parks. And, afterall, the bureaucratic obstacles the initiative encountered could have been foreseen but they could not have been avoided, by foreigners and locals alike.

*Project methods and strategies*

The Nanaiski Model Forest project and the project for economic development – its main international development component – are here considered a success…

Exchange: As can be concluded from the project descriptions above, several work methods were common to every one of the planned project initiatives. For example, all of the Canadian model forest team's work in Nanaiski raion was based in exchanges between Russia and Canada. Every initiative within the project for economic

development started and largely depended on multiple exchange trips to Russia by Canadian project participants and to Canada by Russian villagers, business owners, and government officials from the raion. During these exchanges, each side was shown their counterpart's traditional approach and understanding of the different elements of each initiative. For example, the program aiming to develop the tourism industry of the raion involved a number of visits by Russian project participants to Canada where the visitors were shown through very concrete examples how tourism is promoted in similar forest areas in Canada. The Russians observed and learned about the policy, economic, and implementation background of Canadian eco-tourism, and were thus given an opportunity to transform their traditional perception of tourism as strictly government-controlled and directed to that of an industry that depends on demand. Meanwhile, the Canadian group involved in the project had a chance to understand the existing framework for tourism in Russia and alter its project plans to take cultural differences between Russia and Canada into account.

Training: The project components were also implemented with the use of professional trainings by field experts. The Canadian team provided structured multi-session practical courses focused on specific skills and expertise in which the Nanaiski communities were lacking. For the development of value-added wood products, Russian villagers and business owners were shown, for example, how to dry wood and how dried wood can be used to make wood products like house frames and furniture. In another example of this project implementation method, the Nanaiski Consumer Cooperative (NCC) was taught how to conduct market research with the goal of applying this newly-acquired skill to the marketing of regional non-wood products. A long-term investment in the development of the Nanaiski raion, training and area expertise empowered Russians through practical knowledge and skills and enabled them to become resources to their own communities.

The market research performed by the Cooperative is one example of another project method: extensive market research. The implementation of all initiatives depended directly on the findings of surveys of the current conditions within which the teams had to operate. Market demand, consumer preferences, local attitudes, and government policies and regulations were amongst the key economic conditions researched by both the Canadian project design teams and the Russian participants. Before local birch juice was put on the market, to give one example, local producers asked potential consumers what size container they would prefer for the beverage, then producers used this survey's findings to design the juice box. More generally, the Canadian teams surveyed their audience to find out the kinds of skills that were prevalent locally and what kinds should be emphasized in order to make implementation of the project elements plausible.

Community-centered – adapt to local conditions: In addition to these specific work methods, larger project strategies are present in every one of the six individual initiatives. The first is that, although the Canadian project designers come into the raion with a kind of pre-made model for promoting sustainable forest management and economic

development in Russia, they implement this model by continuously changing it to adapt it to the specific needs and conditions of the Nanaiski communities. On many occasions, the Canadian team reports that portions of the overall model were met with hesitation and did not pick up momentum, that locals needed more or altogether different training, or that local conditions simply did not allow for the realization of certain ideas.

Community-centered – use of own resources: By being community-centered, the project's work consequently requires that the recipient communities use their own resources to cover the cost of long-term changes. In other words, the foreign expertise and professional guidance through both example and direct involvement is given to the communities free of monetary charge to them, but the projects cannot happen without solid local commitment. To realize them, locals have to not only be willing to invest time and effort into training and research, but they also have to create their own products, establish and maintain their own businesses and purchase their own technical equipment, small and large, as needed for the implementation of initiatives.

Integrated, multi-disciplinary economics: Lastly, the most general strategy for these initiatives that serves as a foundational basis for the entire economic development project in the Khabarovsk Model Forest is to understand economic development as multi-faceted and to approach it in a multi-disciplinary, integrated manner. That economic development can be business development and entrepreneurship, natural resource conservation, tourism, and indigenous rights and cultural heritage all at the same time is to perceive development as more than employment and GDP statistics. In the case of the Khabarovsk Model Forest, it is to comprehend that these statistics are important indicators of quality of life but that they cannot be increased to standard satisfactory levels and maintained at these levels if the Model Forest project neglects to account for the context within which it is to be implemented.

As stated by project observers: "The project goal was to increase the region's capacity to identify and respond to market opportunities within its natural resource sector by increasing the skills of key business and government specialists and through the creation of new economic opportunities within the resources sector."[27] The project's approach to development is based in economics and defines development largely as an increase in economic opportunities and economic growth, but it also accounts for the specific conditions, capabilities, and interests of the communities it engages. The end result is development that views the region as a system and incorporates the issues of national and regional unemployment, sustainable resource extraction and environmental protection, native indigenous cultures, industrial enterprises, and international eco-tourism.

[27] McGregor Model Forest Association, 2004, p. 4.

Over a decade after its introduction in Eastern Russia, the Gassinski Model Forest has grown into a prototype for other projects in sustainable forest maintenance around the country. Under Russian initiative and foreign financial and training assistance, four additional Model Forests have been established, and in 2006 major steps were taken to create a Russian Model Forest Network, modeled after its Canadian predecessor, with the purpose of facilitating communication between the various projects around the country.[28]

## ***CASE 2: Kuapa Kokoo Cooperative, Ghana***

*Background and foundations*

At a July 2005 meeting of the UN General Assembly, the UN Secretary-General submitted a report on cooperatives in which he praises cooperatives as a tool for poverty alleviation:

> Cooperatives contribute directly to the eradication of poverty through the economic and social progress of their members and employees and indirectly through stimulating the economies and enhancing the social fabric of the communities in which they operate. Their importance is linked to their purpose and the values and principles they espouse to their members and their communities. In other words, when the objective is to enable poor people to help themselves through economic activity that builds on their strengths and compensates for their weaknesses, then people-centered businesses such as cooperatives have built-in advantages.[29]

An institution so highly regarded by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, what precisely is a cooperative?

Dating to 1844 and the society of the Rochdale Pioneers in England, the cooperative was first established as a way to reduce the hardship of poor workers – weavers in the case of the first cooperative – by pooling their resources and making consumer goods more accessible. It is the cooperative of the Rochdale Pioneers that serves as the foundation for the basic structure, values, and principles of all cooperatives.[30] The UN defines the entity as "an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise." In fewer words, a cooperative is an economic enterprise that is owned and operated by its members. Cooperatives are founded on the

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[28] McGregor Model Forest Association, "Newsletter: September 2006," Official Website, September 2006, July 2007 <http://www.mcgregor.bc.ca/mmf/385/sep+2006+newsletter>

[29] United Nations Secretary General, "Cooperatives in Social Development," Official Website, 2005, p. 4, July 2007 <http://www.copac.coop/a60138e.pdf>.

[30] International Co-operative Alliance, "Co-operative History: The Rochedale Pioneers," Official Website, 2005, July 2007 <http://www.ica.coop/coop/history.html>.

values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, and equality and solidarity, and they abide by seven principles: "voluntary and open membership, democratic member control, member economic participation, autonomy and independence, education, training and information."[31]

There are consumer cooperatives which organize buyers, and there are producer cooperatives, which act almost like a union for producers or employees within a certain sector of the economy. The cooperative model can be applied to any business activity, so co-ops exist in any given sector of the local and global economy.[32]

*Why cooperatives?*

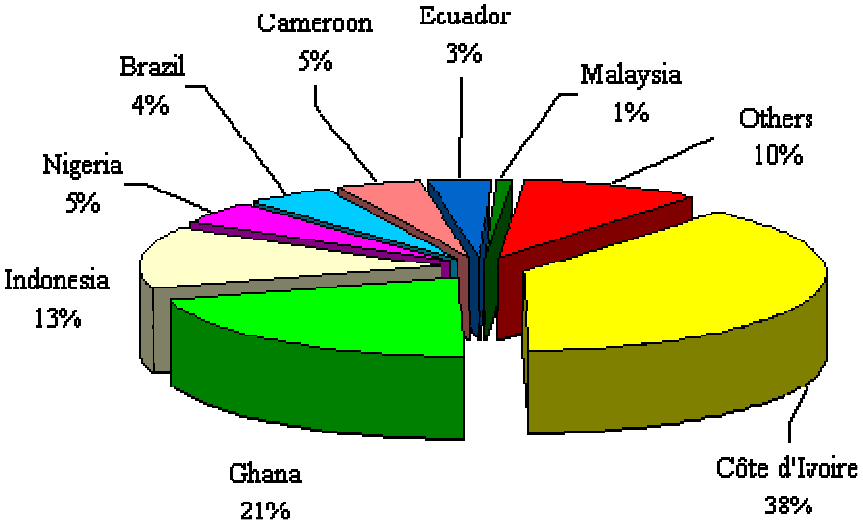
According to the International Cooperative Alliance, an international body that unites and represents cooperatives globally, over 800 million people are members of cooperatives and these organizations provide over 100 million jobs worldwide.[33] It makes sense to ask why cooperatives are so popular, and not only in specific parts of the world but globally. As stated in the report cited above, the UN argues that in the developing world cooperatives help to alleviate poverty, and they do this in a number of different ways. In the case of producers, cooperatives unite members of the same sector of the economy and by pooling their production capacity, expertise, and resources, these organizations ensure employment and allow access to a larger market at lower risk by increasing producers' bargaining power. In most instances their united financial resource base allows them to provide micro-credit for improvements in the production process and the start-up of new entrepreneurial initiatives. Cooperatives provide members with special training and education opportunities that are otherwise unavailable or out of their financial reach; in many cases they help to distribute essential resources, such as water or electricity, to local communities without regular access to them; and, perhaps most importantly, they help to fight poverty by giving the less powerful and the poor members of a society a local voice through the cooperative values of participation and representation in community alliances for economic and social development.[34]

*Kuapa Kokoo*

One of many examples of producer cooperatives around the world is the Kuapa Kokoo cooperative of cocoa farmers in Ghana. Founded in 1993 during a wave of liberalization of the country's cocoa market, Kuapa Kokoo was started to empower cocoa farmers by eliminating the middle men and instead collecting and selling the farmers' product for their benefit. After gold, cocoa is Ghana's most important export, and the country is the world's second-largest exporter of the crop. In fact, cocoa grown in Ghana is prized as

[31] UN Secretary General, 2005, p. 5.
[32] International Co-operative Alliance, "Co-operative Sectors," Official Website, 2006, July 2007 <http://www.ica.coop/coop/sectors.html>.
[33] International Co-operative Alliance, "Statistical Information on the Co-operative Movement," Official Website, 2007, July 2007 <http://www.ica.coop/coop/statistics.html>.
[34] UN Secretary General, 2005, p. 4-11.

the world's finest.[35] In the 1970's and 1980's, world cocoa prices dropped dramatically as more countries were encouraged to produce and export larger quantities of it. Many of Ghana's cocoa farmers suffered economically. Coupled with government mismanagement of the industry, this crisis pushed many of Ghana's cocoa farmers out of the trade.




Source: UNCTAD based on data from International Cocoa Organization's bulletin of cocoa statistics

The following decade of the 1990's brought more stability in world prices, but from the start it was also symbolic of the trend to liberalize the global economy that continues today. If the world supply of cocoa is larger than the world demand for it, the highly unregulated international market lets the price of cocoa drop. The economic justification for deregulated markets is based in the observation lower cocoa prices make cocoa a less desirable crop and push enough producers out of the cocoa economy to reduce production, and as the supply of cocoa is reduced but demand remains the same (as it is assumed that people around the world will continue to consume more or less the same amount of chocolate that they have been), cocoa prices automatically rise back to a level that allows farmers to sustain themselves and the market is back to a point of equilibrium.

This assumption about the behavior of the market when it is unregulated is an entirely accurate observation. And it is not its accuracy that groups like the Kuapa Kokoo cooperative dispute. Rather, they focus on the effects that such price volatility can have on the producer. In the case of cocoa, as with coffee, when world prices drop, they are often so low that to continue to grow cocoa becomes financially unfeasible for farmers.

[35] Divine Chocolate, "Our Story," Official Website, 2007, July 2007 <http://www.divinechocolateusa.com/about>.

This is so when world prices are very unstable, but even when a price fall is not dramatic, cocoa farmers still experience a significant economic impact because the cocoa trade typically has many middle men. In the case of Ghana, whose cocoa producers are small, family farmers that number over 2 million in a country of around 23 million people, the intermediaries are both private companies and the government. So, a long chain of exchange is formed: the small farmer sells his harvest of cocoa beans to a private company which collects all of the country's cocoa and then sells it to the country's government-run national Cocoa Board. After this the government sells the cocoa either to large international buyers, who are mostly large chocolate companies, or to international distributors who become another intermediary in the cocoa trade by then selling the cocoa to small companies and businesses who ultimately use the beans to make their own individual products.[36] Every hand through which cocoa passes on its way from farmers to consumers adds its own profit percentage to the base price of the crop, that which was paid to the farmer. When the market experiences shifts and price drops, the intermediaries certainly often take cuts, but their liability is small compared to that of the farmer who has the least control over how much he will receive for his product. After the middle men take their cut, which can technically remain steady despite a price decrease, the farmer has to accept whatever price he is offered for his cocoa and be underpaid because if he does not, he will simply not sell his cocoa at all.

The group of Ghanaian cocoa farmers who created the Kuapa Kokoo cooperative hoped to reduce the harmful effects of the global market on the country's cocoa farmer by eliminating exactly these two negative aspects of the cocoa trade. First, the principle of Fair Trade would be applied and member farmers would set one unified price for their crop that would allow them to sustain themselves economically and continue to farm cocoa into the future despite periodic global market fluctuations. This would give farmers precisely the influence that they lack under the traditional system described. Then, to make this higher level of control over cocoa prices possible, the cooperative as its own distributor would bypass one intermediary in the trade and sell its cocoa directly to Ghana's Cocoa Board or, in a more ideal scenario, skip even the Cocoa Board and sell directly to Fair Trade cocoa companies around the world.[37]

*Structure*

The cooperative was created by a group of cocoa farmers who received support from two foreign non-governmental organizations to establish for small cocoa farmers a cocoa trading arm independent of the private companies that typically purchased cocoa from farmers to sell it to the Ghana Cocoa Board. Villages of cocoa farmers create their own village societies which form local committees and elect representatives to the overall organization of the Kuapa Kokoo Farmers Union. Based in the democratic principle of participation by all members and one-person-one-vote decision-making, the cooperative

[36] Pa Pa Paa!, "Info," Official Website, 2005, p. 2, July 2007 <http://www.papapaa.org/pdf/info.pdf>.
[37] Pa Pa Paa!,2005, p. 3-4.

is run by its members and designed to meet the needs of the individual cocoa farmers and farmer families that make up the organization.

There are several elements or sub-organizations that comprise the Kuapa Kokoo cooperative. The first is the general Farmers Union. The aim of the Union is to market the cooperative's cocoa to the Western market as well as to improve farming methods and apply to them the principles of environmental sustainability. Kuapa Kokoo Limited is the actual commercial and trading entity through which the Farmers Union sells Kuapa Kokoo's cocoa on the global market. As more than just an economic entity, the cooperative also has a social infrastructure initiative, named the Farmers Trust. The role of the trust is to invest coop resources into community programs for member villages and farmer families. To promote a culture of savings and to extend credit to small entrepreneurial ventures and social programs within the Kuapa Kokoo farmer communities, the cooperative has its own Credit Union.[38]

Lastly, to create an alternative to the traditional method of selling cocoa through the Ghana Cocoa Board and the rest of the intermediaries in the cocoa trade, in 1997 the farmers of Kuapa Kokoo decided to set up their own chocolate company. In partnership with Twin Trading, the leading producer-centered trading company in the UK promoting sustainable trading partnerships,[39] and The Body Shop, Kuapa Kokoo started Divine Chocolate (originally the Day Chocolate Company). Under one-third ownership by Kuapa Kokoo, Divine Chocolate is the direct recipient of much of the cooperative's Fair Trade certified cocoa and is today a leading Fair Trade chocolate brand in the UK. In 2006 the company expanded into the much larger US chocolate market by opening offices in Washington, DC.[40]

*Outcomes*

How much has Kuapa Kokoo actually accomplished? For a project in social and economic development on the African continent – a place where the number of miserably failed foreign economic, political, and social experiments probably cannot be counted – the cooperative has benefited its members quite impressively. On the one hand, by eliminating one set of the several hands through which cocoa passes on its way out of producer communities, Kuapa Kokoo secures higher pay for farmers. Even when there is only a small difference between the price paid directly by the Cocoa Board and that which a private company would pay for cocoa that it then sells to the government, slightly higher pay can mean the difference between having enough to sustain a farming family and barely covering anything more than the cost of growing cocoa for another year. This is especially the case when the farmers are able to sell their cocoa at Fair Trade prices. Although less than 5% of Kuapa Kokoo's cocoa is currently exported as Fair Trade, the expansion of Divine Chocolate and growing demand for Fair Trade

[38] Kuapa Kokoo Co-Operative, Official Website, 2007, July 2007 <http://www.kuapakokoogh.com >.
[39] Twin Trading LTD, "About Us," Official Website, July 2007 <http://www.twin.org.uk/about.html>.
[40] Divine Chocolate, 2007.

products in the West is slowly but surely changing these numbers.[41] Through partial ownership of Divine Chocolate, Kuapa Kokoo farmers and the overall cooperative organization also receive shares of the profits made from the sale of the company's chocolate. Part of this money goes directly back into the hands of the farmers as bonus payments and the remainder of it is invested in the community programs operated by the cooperative.

Alongside the economic benefit of cooperative membership, it is Kuapa Kokoo's programs and initiatives that significantly invest in and development cocoa farming communities. Over the last nearly fifteen years, the cooperative has provided training in record keeping and quality control and thus given farmers valuable skills in the cocoa trade while also helping them become more self-sufficient. Its members have placed emphasis on acquiring and applying expertise in environmentally conscious farming practices that have made both farms and farmers' families healthier. With funding pooled by the Kuapa Kokoo Trust, projects have also been implemented to clean up village water wells and to provide routine medical services in mobile health clinics. The cooperative's Credit Union, in addition, funded on the same principle of member investment as the Trust, extends financial assistance to members with well-formulated ideas for new community business as well as to families in need of a short-term loan for domestic purposes. These initiatives not only offer practical assistance to Kuapa Kokoo farmers and their families, they also teach farmer villages essential principles of money management, savings, and community investment.[42]

In addition to these projects, a few years after its creation the cooperative made the collective decision to start a Gender Initiative. The Initiative was started with the goal of providing women in communities traditionally centered on male farmers the unique opportunity to apply their skills to community projects and small business. While working to empower farmers, Kuapa Kokoo's members realized it was necessary to give women who are typically marginalized in Ghanaian society a chance to become more active in their farming communities. Women could organize project groups around a craft, farming, or community activity they wished to pursue collectively, they would be trained in the areas of business management, pricing and costing of products, group dynamics, and planning, to name a few, and if a group is able to come up with a project that the cooperative wishes to fund, a short-term loan is extended to the women to enable them to realize their project. To sustain a project, while the loan made to it is paid off, the cooperative invests 30% of interest back into the project.[43] The Gender Initiative has resulted not only in numerous community projects and businesses, it has also promoted

[41] Pa Pa Paa!,2005, p. 3-4.
[42] Divine Chocolate, "Kuapa Kokoo,"Official Website, 2007, July 2007 <http://www.divinechocolate.com/about/kokoo.aspx>.
[43] Kuapa Kokoo Co-Operative, 2007.

gender equality amongst members and allowed women to step into positions of decision-making and leadership through which they have helped to strengthen the cooperative.[44]

*Project methods and strategies*

Under the cooperative model, Kuapa Kokoo is financially self-sufficient and it is owned and operated by its members through democratic participation and decision-making. From the start, the organization has relied entirely on the resources of its members – there were no large international donations and no aid money was even necessary to make the cooperative possible. Its few first member farmers began the organization by providing a network of villages their own scales for weighing cocoa and taught farmers how to measure and record their own product. Then the organization provided these farmers with a new, more profitable means of selling cocoa. Though a significant investment for the founding members of Kuapa Kokoo, this was by no means a project centered on large sums of money and celebrity investors. Rather, it was for the community by the community. The early practices of the cooperative won the trust of an ever-growing number of small cocoa farmers, so the organization became a feasible endeavor. As membership and Kuapa Kokoo's cocoa supply grew and sales were made at prices more stable and reasonable than those paid by private companies, villages in the cooperative network gained financially and earned the capacity to invest back into Kuapa Kokoo.

The several branches and functions of the cooperative were established with funds from cocoa sales with the purpose of addressing the needs of the communities that make them possible. The farmers' need to be part of the cooperative attaches to them the responsibility to maintain Kuapa Kokoo, and by investing back into it to maintain it, they gain more individually while assisting their larger communities into the process of social and economic development. The circular flow of finances within the cooperative teaches farmers that they benefit by doing and giving, and it also makes for the creation of programs and institutions that have the potential to directly address the demands of Kuapa Kokoo's membership while operating in accordance with community ideas and expertise.

Kuapa Kokoo can have this effect because it is based in democratic participation. The cooperative functions just as its members decide that it will, so it is able to address its own necessities and protect its own interests without the need for outside direction or artificial encouragement. Possibly the most important and noteworthy effect of the self-financing and democratic decision-making nature of the cooperative is that participating cocoa farming communities are allowed a level of dignity rarely granted to economically weak groups on the receiving end of international aid and development assistance. The Western patronization of poor communities in the developing world is a large component of the donor-driven approach to international development that has repeatedly made for

[44] International Co-Operative Alliance, "Annual Report 2006," Official Website, 2006, p. 3, July 2007 <http://www.ica.coop/publications/ar/2006annualreport.pdf>.

failed projects. It is this negative Western attitude that embarrasses many in the developing world and pushes them to abandon their own communities, and it is also this foreign sense of superiority that makes for projects entirely unfitting for the context in which they are designed to operate.

## Conclusions

In the words of the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Anan, as already quoted earlier, "[T]he objective [of international development] is to enable poor people to help themselves through economic activity that builds on their strengths and compensates for their weaknesses." This has been the objective of international development in theory since its modern conceptions in the post-World War II era, but geographical, contextual, and theoretical distance between development planners, financial donors, and workers, on the one hand, and underdeveloped communities, on the other, has made for a movement that repeatedly fails to fully accomplish its central goal. The prominent Western model of international development too frequently fails to lend a hand to those who most need it, "to enable them to help themselves."[45]

Many of the discipline's critics – as well as this paper itself – deeply criticize the manner in which the West involves itself in the developing world. There are even some voices that demand that wealthy countries and international institutions leave international development entirely in the hands of the developing world. Should international development work stop altogether? An understanding of the historical problems with international aid and development need not bring us to this conclusion.

In its most basic form, international assistance can be boiled down to an act of giving up a little of what one does not need so another can make it through one more day. When faced with images of African or South-East Asian toddlers with swollen bellies, we are all likely to be moved to think that we can't just let starved children in the developing world die. Even though similarly striking images of poverty in our own countries may

[45] UN Secretary General, 2005, p. 4.

not conjure up a similarly empathetic response, even if to "help" the developing world can be seen as Western ethnocentric ethics and morality, much good can come out of the redistribution of wealth and economic prosperity advocated by international aid and development. Western governments and the industry of organizations and individuals that represent international development today can have a positive role in the alleviation of poverty around the world.

Moreover, international aid and intervention, in their many forms, have been around for a long time and they are not on their way out of politics and policies, domestic and international. Although some may feel the urge to grab an international development agency by the collar and shout in frustration, "You are doing it all wrong, leave them alone!," international development is not only an institution that, like any other, would be nearly structurally impossible to dismantle after so many years of intense activity; it also cannot be stripped entirely of its interventionist character because, by definition, international development means development through foreign involvement, assistance, and aid.
What should, then, be concluded from an overview of the 20th century legacy of international development is just how essential it is that future projects of international development make as few of the historical mistakes thus far attributed to the discipline as possible. One most simple, straight-forward way of doing so that has made the Gassinski Model Forest and Kuapa Kokoo Co-Operative projects a success is to approach international development through an integrative, multidisciplinary focus on communities.

A flexible community-centered and multidisciplinary form of international development may not be as easy as it probably has been to design and implement cookie-cutter projects, but this is certainly a logical, common-sense approach. There are two main reasons for this. The first is that anyone who has even the most minimal understanding of poverty would agree that it is caused and perpetuated by more than one factor. Whenever poverty is on the agenda of local, state, or federal legislators in the US, for example, the topic spurs contentious debate, and the complexity of the issue makes policy decisions controversial, and altogether very challenging. Extensive research is conducted, experts from various academic and professional disciplines are consulted, and communities are heard before policy is drafted. Policy implementation, then, requires even more extensive work, if new policy is to be effective. Even after all this effort, the US – the world's prosperous economic giant – still sees one of every six of its children go hungry every day. If poverty alleviation within a democratic and well-understood system is such the multifaceted process, it follows that poverty alleviation in the distant, less-known developing world requires a similarly complex approach. The most logical way to approach development would be through the integration of as many of the aspects of life in a community or a country as possible into a specific project. It is only through such integration that the world can begin to understand the problem it is trying to eliminate.

A second reason to advocate for this change in the international development project model, just as simple as the first, is that if the recipient community is involved in its own development and economic advancement, foreign assistance can be applied more fittingly – where it is needed, as it is needed. This is an extension of the argument already made about the complexity of the issues that comprise poverty. There is no better way to help a community than to ask it what it needs and then help it meet its needs. Community involvement and ownership of a project, as both the Gassinski Model Forest and Kuapa Kokoo demonstrate, has the potential to make a project more efficient and more beneficial. It also strengthens communities and makes them more self-reliant and self-sufficient.

In some sense, to promote and encourage the bottom-up multidisciplinary approach to development that this paper encourages is to advocate for an alternative to the current model of global politics and economics, to ask for a world where the West does not meddle in the affairs of the poor and does not call countries "backwards." But, to completely reverse the traditional model and understanding of development would, realistically, require a revolution of world politics and the global economy, a transformation of entire historical trends. The goal of a multidisciplinary and community-oriented approach to international development is plainly, much more humbly and practically, to make international development more humane: to make it possible for communities to live a dignified life that allows for the preservation of culture, history, and tradition; to give communities the chance to participate in the global economy without coercion and objectification; to give people a voice and a choice.

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