IAF Fellowships: Funding Scholarship at the Grassroots

By Mark Caicedo

Since awarding its first development grant in 1972, the Inter-American Foundation has been known for funding the grassroots efforts of the organized poor in Latin America and the Caribbean. Less well-known is the IAF's support for academic research into grassroots trends and topics, a commitment that dates back almost as far—to IAF's Machado Program that president Bill Dyal launched to fund graduate studies in U.S. universities by "Latin American researchers looking at the same kinds of problems as people who designed projects."

Dyal moved next to fund an initial group of four U.S. doctoral students, then, very briefly, post-doctoral researchers and finally master's degree candidates. IAF president Deborah Szekely instituted the highly selective Dante B. Fascell Inter-American Fellowship that between 1991 and 1995 allowed a handful of outstanding Latin American and Caribbean grassroots leaders to pursue, anywhere they chose to do so, independent study leading to dissemination of their successful approaches across the hemisphere. Alumni from all programs now total 1,047 individuals; they worked in 35 countries and represent 117 U.S. universities in 36 states. The Machado Program proved so successful that it became the model for the program of Ashoka Fellows.

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At the 2010 mid-year conference in Mexico City: Peter Wilshusen, a professor at Bucknell University and a scholar on IAF's Academic Review Committee, was in the last group of Fellows funded before the IAF suspended the Fellowship Program in 1999. Jaime Amparo Alves, a Brazilian student at the University of Texas, conducted research in a favela outside São Paulo as a Fellow in the 2009-2010 cycle.

Between 2000 and 2006 the IAF suspended all Fellowships for budgetary reasons. In 2007, one component was reinstated: support for doctoral dissertation research undertaken by students enrolled in U.S. universities. A major structural change is the administration of the Fellowships by the Institute of International Education. Information and procedures can be found at www.iie.org/iaf; communication via a social networking site brings the program into the digital age.

The 15 Fellows are selected by a committee of scholars, some of them former Fellows, drawn from universities throughout the country. Fellows receive a monthly stipend for up to one year, a research allowance, round-trip travel to the research site and health insurance. The IAF also covers the expenses of their attendance at an annual mid-year conference, a unique feature of IAF's Fellowships that brings the year's cycle of Fellows together for several days. The lively, intense agenda includes presentation of the research, individual meetings with the selection committee, group discussions on issues in grassroots development and time to exchange ideas with each other. Fellows also visit IAF projects. As IAF president from 1984 to 1991, Deborah Szekely always attended the mid-year meetings, which she recalled could be a "mid-term correction," ensuring research projects stayed on track. "A lot of the students are OK," she said, "but a few find changed circumstances on the ground. Yet they have arranged to be away from their universities and are in country, so you work it out."

Szekely valued the exposure of scholars to "a hands-on, three-dimensional experience," such as Elizabeth Lockwood and Luis Fujiwara, both of the 2008-2009 Fellowship cycle, share in the pages that follow. She also pointed to the impact on higher education, noting the prevalence of former Fellows serving in the leadership of the Latin American Studies Association. The IAF's roots in academia, in fact, run deep. With his articles in *Foreign Affairs* and his book *The Engines of Change*, Harvard professor George C. Lodge significantly influenced the intellectual climate that led to the founding of the IAF in the late 1960s and he was appointed to the new agency's founding board of directors. Most notably, Lodge wrote that poverty was the greatest threat to U.S. interests in the Americas. In his 1969 article "U.S. Aid to Latin America: Funding Radical Change," he urged creation of an "American Foundation [to] find and fund the *engines of change* which work directly to revolutionize Latin American social and political structures." Research supported with IAF Fellowships examines those engines of change—grassroots and nongovernmental organizations—and the context in which they work, adding to the body of scholarship on social change in the hemisphere and introducing a practical focus.

Among the first four students whose doctoral dissertation research the IAF funded was Kevin Healy, now IAF representative for Bolivia, an adjunct professor at Georgetown University and a member of the committee that selects IAF Fellows. Healy's study of the resistance to Bolivian government's land reforms of the 1950s, undertaken as a Fellow, became a best-selling book, a standard text in Bolivian universities, and, more recently, the subject of an interview with the author televised in Bolivia in connection with the land reform law passed in 2008. The ongoing relevance of his dissertation is one reason for Healy's reputation as a leading expert on Bolivian development and indigenous movements in Latin America.

Among other Fellows who have influenced generations of students as well as institutions and public policy, including development assistance policy, are Jonathan Fox, University of California at Santa Cruz; Carl J. Bauer, University of Arizona; Lynn Bolles, University of Maryland; Alika Wali, Field Museum of Chicago; Philip Herr, the Government Accountability

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Mid-year conference, 2008: IAF President Larry Palmer supported the revival of IAF's Fellowships; IAF representative Kevin Healy is on the Academic Review Committee.

Office; James Nations, formerly of Conservation International National and now with the Parks Conservation Association Center for State of the Parks; Michael Painter, World Wildlife Fund; and Tom Reardon, Institute for International Food Policy. Latin Americans who came to the U.S. as Fellows between 1974 and 1999 include Wasar Ari, of the University of Nebraska, the first indigenous Bolivian Aymara to earn a Ph.D.; and Javier Morales Gonzáles, who served as Nicaragua's vice minister of commerce; and Tomás Huanca, now a researcher with Centro Boliviano de Desarrollo y de Investigación Socio-Integral (CBIDSI).

The IAF is the only institution that specifically funds research targeting grassroots development in Latin America and the Caribbean. All Fellows are required to have an institutional affiliation, which brings them together with their academic peers and colleagues to discuss and debate contemporary issues related to the grassroots development in the hemisphere. Fellows are also in daily contact with practitioners and the grassroots. In this manner, IAF's Fellowships complement its development grants in furthering the IAF's mission to "strengthen the bonds of friendship and understanding" in this hemisphere and reinforce an approach that is constantly validated in development literature.

Mark Caicedo, also IAF's photo editor, has worked with IAF's Fellowship program since 1994.

Mobilizing the Deaf Community in Uruguay

By Elizabeth M. Lockwood

More than 50 million persons with disabilities live in Latin America and the Caribbean, comprising 15 percent of the population. Eighty percent of those individuals are impoverished, unemployed and socially excluded (Astorga, 2009; Inter-American Development Bank, 2007; The World Bank, 2005). Regardless of apparent need, the disabled population in this region is one of the most neglected in the world. Yet the Deaf* community in Uruguay, totaling less than 1 percent of the country's inhabitants, has successfully organized to push for deaf-focused laws as well as government programs and policies. The consequent benefits to Deaf Uruguayans include bilingual primary education in Uruguayan sign language (LSU) and Spanish; the assignment of interpreters to secondary schools, certain universities and employment interviews; the introduction of relay operators in telecommunications; recognition of LSU as an official language; a 75 percent discount on text messages; close-captioned films; and training in sign language for government employees.

As an Inter-American Foundation Grassroots Development Fellow, I spent 12 months in Uruguay researching why this community is significantly more mobilized than the other Uruguayan disability groups, whose members are more numerous, and than other Deaf communities in Latin America and the Caribbean. An exploratory case study of the Deaf community in Montevideo was my point of departure. I interviewed 14 leaders of the Deaf community, who provided insight into their involvement in collective action. Interviews with a subsample, consisting of 12 other community members, yielded complementary, ground-level perspectives. I also observed approximately 500 community members from throughout Montevideo and reviewed approximately 90 government documents dating from 1902.

In early July 2009, just one month before completing my fieldwork, I received an unexpected invitation from the IAF to present my findings at the *VI Encuentro Latinoamericano de Sordos* conference in Bogotá. It consisted of three concurrent conferences organized by the Colombian Deaf community: the Sixth National Congress on the Current Situation of Deaf Colombians "Past, Present, and Future", Sixth Latin American Meeting of the Deaf, First Latin American Meeting of Interpreters. Accompanying me were Isabel Pastor, founder of the Uruguayan interpreter-training school, *Centro de Invesitgación y Desarrollo para la Persona* [Center for Research and Development for the Deaf] (CINDE), whose participation was also funded by the IAF; and, representing the Deaf community, Blanca Macchi, who was funded by the World Federation of the Deaf. Attendance at all three conferences allowed me to reconnect with familiar faces and form new professional alliances—such is the nature of the Deaf world. Now that I am back at the University of Illinois at Chicago, I collaborate with a Colombian whom I met at the *Encuentro*.

Christiana Kasner

Mid-year conference, 2009: Elizabeth Lockwood.

I shared the successful endeavors of the Uruguayan Deaf community with an audience consisting primarily of Deaf community leaders from various Latin American and Caribbean nations, as well as some hearing allies. Key findings from my research indicate that Deaf Uruguayans prefer to work together toward their objectives rather than follow a single leader. In fact, the Uruguayan Deaf community generally rejects concentrating power and authority in one or several individuals and instead encourages dialogue and collaboration as well as coordination with hearing allies.

Increased access to qualified sign-language interpreters, secondary and post-secondary education via sign language, and media and technology have led to better communication, greater awareness of the surrounding world, and a more informed and cohesive community. The Deaf community in Uruguay does not actively pursue the formation of transnational networks with other Deaf groups in the region or local networks with other Uruguayan disability groups. Instead it targets partnerships with entities of the Uruguayan government, an approach perhaps facilitated by the fluidity and social structure of the Uruguayan political system. Advocacy with these state partners—for equal access to information, the means of communication and public services—is the *sine qua non* of the Deaf community's noteworthy accomplishments.

After my presentation, various Deaf leaders and hearing allies expressed interest in applying the experience of the Deaf Uruguayan community to their respective communities. Representatives from Bolivia and Guatemala were especially receptive since their communities still lack deaf-focused services. Both countries have a well-developed sign language widely used by Deaf persons, but they lack the services necessary to allow the Deaf community to access information and connect with hearing society. [ED: the IAF has funded efforts to codify the sign language used in Nicaragua and Ecuador.] Other hearing allies, interpreters and community activists at the *Encuentro* also spoke of future collaboration.

The enthusiastic response to my findings reconfirmed the dire need for Deaf-focused development in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially given the pervasive communication and language barriers that result in less accommodation of deaf citizens than of those belonging to other disability groups. I plan to continue to work with and conduct research on Deaf communities in Latin America and the Caribbean. In this connection, my understanding of the Uruguayan Deaf community will be a valuable resource. I am deeply grateful to this community for its acceptance and collaboration and to the IAF for its support.

Elizabeth Lockwood successfully defended her thesis this spring.

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*According to *Inside Deaf Culture*, by C. Padden and T. Humphries, "Deaf" refers to a group of deaf people who comprise a community sharing a common sign language and culture; "deaf" refers to the medical condition of deafness or hearing loss.

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A Network of Hope

By Luis Fujiwara

As an Inter-American Foundation Grassroots Development Fellow from July 2008 to April 2009, I lived in Dias D'Ávila, a small city on the outskirts of metropolitan Salvador, in the state of Bahia, where horse-drawn wagons still transport food, bricks, sand, cement and people. Most of its 57,000 inhabitants struggle with the same lack of electric, water and sanitation services afflicting rural Brazilians, as well as with the contemporary urban problems associated with drug abuse, crime, crushing unemployment and violence targeting young men.

One hot afternoon in late November 2008, as I was writing up my interviews and observations, I heard a knock on my door. When I answered, I saw four kids with improvised buckets, including the smallest, a five-year-old girl who was carrying a one-liter oil can on her head. The teenager among them explained that they were siblings looking for water. He spoke without a hint of concern or rage in his voice. In fact, all four children acted as if going door to door asking for water were the most natural thing in the world. I felt awkward, but then I thought of my own difficulty getting water. My neighborhood in Dias D'Ávila was served by old and damaged pipelines, most of them illegal connections called *gatos*; water flowed only two or three days a week, usually in a thin trickle. I helped the kids with their chore, and, buckets full, they said good-bye and went happily on their way. Later, I met their mother who said they simply needed enough water to drink, to cook a meal and, occasionally, to bathe. I was living in the midst of families like this one, but until that knock on the door it had not occurred to me how hard life was for them. Powerful experiences such as this change our lives and beliefs in unexpected ways.

Luis Fujiwara

The subject of my research for the dissertation I would defend as a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Texas at Austin was the effectiveness of health services for mothers and children, including proper monitoring of pregnancies and child development, offered by Pastoral da Criança, an ecumenical, faith-based program. Pastoral uses a strategy pioneered by the Catholic Church, and its "working method" incorporates the "GOBI" priorities set by UNICEF in the early 1980s: growth monitoring (G), oral rehydration therapy to counter diarrhea (O), the promotion of breastfeeding (B), and childhood immunizations (I). Complementary components include voluntarism, gender-oriented programs, collective advocacy, microcredit, employment-generation, and a monitoring and communications system that promotes both accountability and the rapid identification of epidemics.

Pastoral works with desperately poor Brazilians and is credited with saving thousands of young lives. Its activities began in 1983 with a pilot in Florestópolis in rural Southern Brazil. Within a year, the infant mortality rate in participating communities had declined 77 percent. Pastoral now reaches more than 70 percent of Brazil's municipalities; in any given month, some 2 million children and 100,000 pregnant women receive treatment through the Pastoral network. Its method has been adopted by the Brazilian government and is applied in 20 developing countries. I could see the need for primary health care for children and pregnant women almost everywhere I went in Brazil, but most visibly in Bahia where poverty and inequality are so widespread. Observing the Pastoral program operating there provided me a clear picture of the power of bottom-up development. The program is simple in its design, cost-effective, far-reaching and participatory, given the importance and impact of volunteers and the emphasis on the autonomy, development and organization of their communities.

My research included 30 interviews with young mothers and pregnant women in communities with and without Pastoral's services and support. Those residing where Pastoral was active seemed more informed and more hopeful. Pastoral communities also seemed more organized in pursuing their needs, including with the municipal government; they engaged in more collective activities; their leaderships took a more active role in local politics. Interestingly, one young mother shared the local impression of me as a "foreigner." I am Brazilian, but I quickly understood the distance created by social and economic status and lack of opportunities. The young woman also told me that I brought hope for better days ahead because no one from a place as remote to her and her neighbors as Texas had ever demonstrated such keen interest in the lives and the welfare of the people in her community.

Not long ago, I learned that Dr. Zilda Arns, the pediatrician who founded Pastoral and was its international coordinator, had died on Jan. 12 in the earthquake that destroyed most of Haiti. She was there on a humanitarian mission to promote Pastoral's services for children and the elderly. She is mourned in Brazil and around the world; President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva and presidential candidates Dilma Roussef and José Serra attended her funeral. Dr. Arns once told me that Pastoral was not about providing primary health care but was above all a network to enable communities to take care of themselves. The loss of Dr. Arns shocked me for a moment and then brought back the time I had spent in the field as a witness to the results of her work on the ground and her hope for the people in those communities.

The daily realities of developing regions are richer than academic theories and offer tremendous opportunities to learn. In the future I might not remember every detail of my experience in Dias D'Ávila, but the smile on the faces of those kids carrying buckets full of water will always be with me, a social footprint to remind me that development is about people and nothing matters more to them than being treated like human beings.

Luis Fujiwara works for the United Nations Development Programme in Brazil. His dissertation defense is scheduled for summer 2010.

Conservation Area

IAF grantee Asociación Ecosistemas Andinos (ECOAN) has been working with communities in the Sacred Valley of the Incas, in the high Andes of the Cusco region, to obtain recognition of their indigenous territory as protected reserves. On May 6, 2010, community representatives and ECOAN staff traveled to Lima for the signing ceremony during which Peru's minister for the environment Antonio Brack officially designated three new Áreas de Conservación Privada (ACP), or conservation areas, in the territory. This important milestone will help ECOAN and local residents protect biodiversity and ensure the responsible use of natural resources on more than 3,400 hectares of community land for at least the next 10 years. The ACP designation is renewable.—*Miriam Brandão, IAF representative for Peru*

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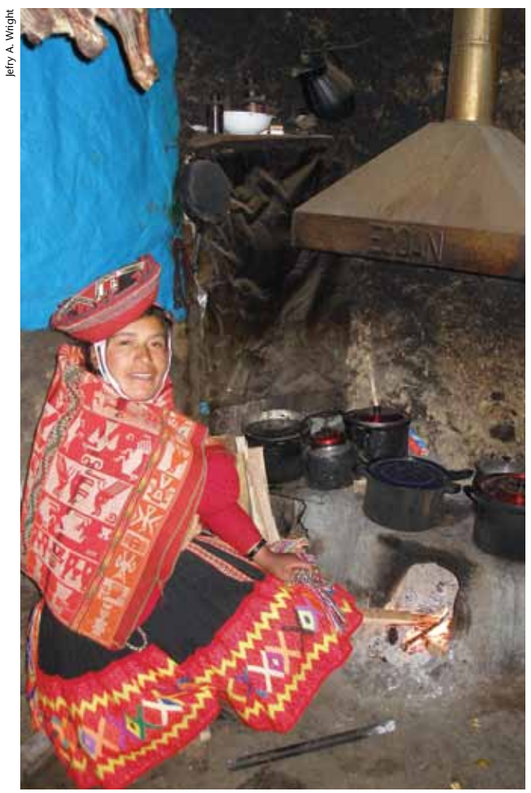
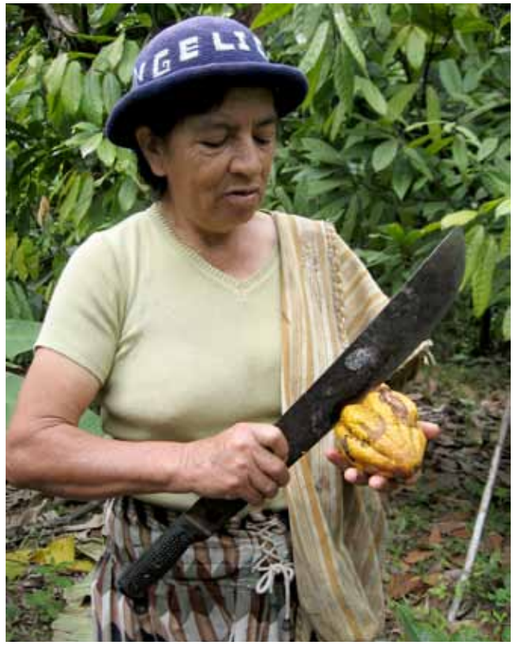


ECOAN's conservation efforts include the installation of more fuel-efficient stoves that burn less wood.



Courtesy PIDECAFE

PIDECAFE's Sublime Cacao

Pierre Marcolini, the renowned Belgian chocolatier, travels the world in search of prime ingredients for the pricey bonbons and truffles savored by the discriminating patrons of his boutiques in Paris, London, Tokyo, Kuwait and New York. Early this year, his quest took him to Piura, Peru, with a film crew from Antena 3-Francia in tow. There he met with at the farmers of recent IAF grantee Programa Integral para el Desarrollo del Café (PIDECAFE), who grow a rare and exquisite variety of cacao known as *porcelana*, or porcelain, because of its white seeds. PIDECAFE's sublime beans will be featured in a documentary on the world's best chocolate along with Marcolini. "White seeds are very difficult to find," he clarifies on camera, visibly moved at having obtained them, according to a report in the May 7 Peruvian daily *El Comercio*. "At home in Brussels, the result will be exceptional chocolate." PIDECAFE used its IAF grant to work with some 750 farmers in eight municipalities of Piura and Tumbes, in northern Peru, toward organic certification of their sugar and cacao crops and to develop the market for their production abroad. For more, visit pidecafe.org and marcolini.be.

Cecilia Duque: Exemplary Colombian

Cecilia Duque Duque, former director of Asociación Colombiana para la Promoción Artesanal (ACPA), an early IAF grantee, was among 18 individuals and organizations awarded the Premio El Colombiano Ejemplar in February by *El Colombiano*, Antioquia's leading daily. Duque was recognized for her tireless efforts to promote Colombian crafts. A 1977 grant from IAF helped ACPA to reach out to artisans and rescue their endangered traditions (see *Grassroots Development* Vol. 30, 1). President Alvaro Uribe attended the ceremony at the Teatro Metropolitano and praised the honorees' accomplishments in science and technology, culture, business, sports and tourism. The circle of winners included rock star Shakira, as well as composer Blas Emilio Atehortúa and the Colombian Paralympics Committee. For more on the Premio El Colombiano Ejemplar and the 2009 winners, visit elcolombiano.com/ce2009.asp.

Cecilia Duque Duque (left) and craftswoman Omayra Manrique.

Sebastian Aloot

Business Networks

The January/February 2010 issue of Central America's business magazine *Microempresas & Microfinanzas* reported that IAF grantee Instituto Hondureño de Desarrollo Alternativo y Sostenible (IHDEAS) had formalized an agreement with Jovenes Industriales (JOVIN) to create a permanent network of experienced individuals willing to mentor aspiring entrepreneurs. IHDEAS uses its 2008 IAF award to support the businesses of young people in Tegucigalpa with loans and technical assistance. Also noted was the agreement between Asociación de Organizaciones de Microfinanzas (ASOMI), a network of 11 microfinance institutions serving some 65,000 Salvadorans, and Asociación de Bancos Cooperativos y Sociedades de Ahorro y Crédito (ASIFBAN) to standardize practices and push for an overhaul of El Salvador's regulatory system to reflect the importance of alternative financial services. ASOMI's 2003 IAF award allowed the network to grow its membership, develop its microfinance services and increase small loans to small- and medium-sized businesses. For more on ASOMI, visit asomi.org.sv.

Prepared for Service

Three Panamanian news outlets, *La Critica, Dia a Dia* and *Panama America*, hailed the December launch of "Girl Guides in Action, Defying Stigma and Discrimination," an IAF-sponsored initiative by Asociación Muchachas Guías Panamá (AMGP); a chapter of the World Organization of the Scout Movement, AMGP. More than 1,000 Girl Guides, ages 15-21, will work throughout Panama to instruct some 3,000 neighbors, teachers and parents in community organizing, and public health, including the prevention of HIV/AIDS. Some of the girls will learn to start their own small businesses. *La Critica* particularly praised the Guides' efforts to fight discrimination targeting those with HIV/AIDS.