Models for Change: Collaboration as the Foundation for Promoting Technology Literacy with Women

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International development work has placed an increasing emphasis on the importance of partnerships, collaboration, and local ownership. We recognize that much was wrong with rich countries developing programs or institutions from outside and simply exporting them to other countries with little knowledge of local needs and conditions, and even less interest or input from the people whom they were supposedly to benefit. Because of "receiving" countries' increasing demands for programs that really work and truly respond to their needs, as well as an increased global recognition of the waste and abuses that occurred when "experts" outside of the local context developed and implemented programs, new models are being developed that better respond to real needs, recognize and honor indigenous knowledge, and have a much greater possibility of having a real impact on social problems, as well as being sustained.

While we recognize that in most cases it is the people for whom programs are intended who best know needs and can devise workable solutions, international collaboration has an important place and needs to continue for a number of reasons. The possibility of exchanging experiences and learning, as well as building on everyone's strengths leads to greater possibilities of our learning evolving and to a better use of available resources. What is needed, then, is a range of new models of collaboration that share power and resources, are workable in practice, and at the same time fulfill the needs of all of the stakeholders.

Many groups are working on developing and implementing new, collaborative approaches to human development, and there are excellent examples of successes, as well as lessons learned from those that did not work as hoped. The Gender and Diversities Institute (GDI) at Education Development Center, Inc., is committed to contributing to this process. GDI is a global forum for leveraging the power of diversity to improve education and work, and uses the lens of gender and its intersections with race, ethnicity, economic status, disability, and sexual orientation to deepen our understanding of critical social problems and to create effective solutions.

GDI has several initiatives in which a new recognition of the benefits of collaboration is integrated. Our basic principles of collaboration include the following: (1) the process is as important as the outcome—all parties can and should learn and benefit from the experience, (2) all parties should contribute and agree to envisioning the process and outcomes, (3) all parties can and should commit and contribute to the work and take responsibility for its outcomes, and (4) all parties should be involved in assessing the success and learning experiences involved. Collaborative work necessarily involves an educational process for all that ensures familiarity with cross-cultural issues as well as a commitment to understand the basic workings of the cultural, social, and geographical

settings in which work is to take place. Communication is often the greatest challenge and an integral aspect of the success or failure of an initiative. We also recognize that the present donor system makes a true collaboration, in which all parties have equal power and voice, an extremely challenging endeavor.

In this paper we will describe several of GDI's initiatives in Kenya and Costa Rica, which are being developed and carried out within the context of technological literacy. Understanding them as works in progress, we will reflect on the processes up to this point, and discuss some of the lessons we have learned so far. We will also share some of the challenges faced when an idea or theory is put to the test of implementation within a real context.

Literacy, Technology, and Technological Literacy

First, we will briefly describe what we mean by technological literacy. As with reading and numerical literacy, there is a range of technological literacy. It can go from the know-how to use a radio or new cooking stove to programming and designing with a computer. There is no universal, desirable goal for technological literacy—in other words the desire and ability to keep up with the latest technological toys and the faster, more powerful machines is not a goal. As the 2001 UNDP Human Development Report states,

> Not all countries need to be on the cutting edge of global technological advance. But in the network age every country needs the capacity to understand and adapt global technologies for local need. . . . . All countries, even the poorest, need to implement policies that encourage innovation, access and the development of advanced skills. (p. 5)

With the incorporation of new technologies into our cultural and social environments, there are inevitably advantages and disadvantages. Our institutional goal in this area of work is to always place gender and diversities at the center of the creation, implementation, and assessment process; and, as much as possible, encourage an open discussion of all of the possible outcomes. In most of our work, we see clear benefits that incorporating technologies in the process can bring. We also believe that women from poorer countries need, in certain contexts, to develop skills with new technologies and that there needs to be a much more diverse group of people, including women of all backgrounds, involved in developing policy and creating and designing new technologies.

Thinking specifically about ICTs (information and communications technologies), we also recognize that in this era of the globalization of an "Information Society"—the Network Age—there are dangers if women and especially women outside of the currently rich and industrialized countries are denied the possibility of access to information or a role in the creation and sharing of that information. We want to avoid the possibility that technology becomes a source of exclusion in development, and rather focus on how it can become a tool of progress and inclusion for women. ICTs will never be *the* answer to social and development problems, but the Internet is a new kind of phenomenon that seems to be more than a simple tool. It is creating a whole new culture with new

definitions for communication, community, and self-identity. As a recent CEPAL report notes,

> Evidence shows that the Internet is much more, or different, than a collection of machines, instruments, cables, servers, knowledge, procedures, and practices that allow us to disseminate information, communicate, entertain, participate, buy and sell, satisfy diverse desires and fantasies, educate and be educated. This collection forms the means by which we inter-relate, our symbols and imaginary representations, the values by which we reference our current life, and how we imagine or project the possible futures we see as desirable.[1] (Bonder, 2002, p. 25)

Because of these new possibilities for communication and information dissemination and collection, the Internet and the new culture that surrounds it do offer some important new options for development. But social development is not inherent or inevitable in these possibilities, because the rapid spread of "connectivity" among certain populations has also brought new problems to the table. The "Digital Divide" is just one of these concerns. Rather than provide marginalized populations a voice and source for information, the tendency has been to further marginalize them. In addition to access, key and necessary work in this area has to focus on usage and creation—and how these new technologies fit in a larger network to promote sustainable human development. As Gómez and Casadiego (2002) so rightly say, "The real contribution to development will come not from the capacity to process and accumulate information, but from generating new knowledge. And ICTs are only one part of this effort."

We have posed to ourselves such questions as must technology always be in the form of imported goods that are so "beautiful" but also so foreign to local realities? Why are there no indigenous technologies that are familiar to the poor and illiterate who have no light switches, ringing telephones, and running water? How can importing technology be a moral obligation while at the same time motivated by profits? How sustainable is exploitation of a desire for modernity in Third World countries through technology, especially when they lack a comprehensive understanding of the many underlying issues? Women create change all the time, but the principle question revolves around the type and quality of that change. At GDI our commitment to change is through learning—any learning that aids in addressing daily human problems and experiences. Whether the problems are wood fuel or gendered violence, they are more likely to be successfully addressed when people are in equal partnership ventures with an appreciation for each others' circumstances.

Kenyan Women and Technology

Communication systems and infrastructure directly impact the extent and sustainability of positive change in rural women's lives, but we also recognize that individuals strive to move along without waiting until optimum development conditions are available. Here we will examine two broad issues facing Kenyan women: (1) what tools do they have and use for effecting change?, and (2) what kind of change do women cause to take place in present-day Kenya?

[1] Translations from the Spanish by Flansburg.

Women in Kenya, like their counterparts in other developing countries, desire change that promotes their economic self-sufficiency and improves the quality of their lives and that of their families. Their political and economic circumstances and their lifestyle both dictate short-term and goal-oriented activities that provide immediate answers to the needs of family members. Long-term financial investments are not their immediate concern as they look for new avenues for earning income to pay for food, health, and shelter. Some development specialists credit "technology" and formal education with the magical capacity to solve all problems. Yet this mainstream, profit-oriented definition equates technology with costly modern gadgetry that is tailor-made for the lifestyles of industrialized countries, which include the buying capacity among consumers. This puts the solution to poverty beyond the reach of those who need it most. Even when rural women pool resources to access and use technology in their quest for change, certain conditions must be met for the desired change to be sustainable.

Pragmatically then, technology must have the following characteristics to be appropriate:

- The technology must be affordable and have potential for short-term and tangible material outcomes.
- The technology must be something that women can learn by seeing, doing, and talking with each other (i.e., without having to learn how to read and write).
- The technology must be situated near home so as not to cause conflict with family responsibilities.
- The technology must be operable in an environment with little or no modern utilities and conveniences (i.e., without electricity, potable water, telephone, or reliable means of transport).
- The technology must be weather and environmentally compliant and require minimal maintenance.

Education and Technology in Kenya

Kenya has no scheme for public funds for education. Therefore, families must be able to pay in order for children to go to school. Despite the economic difficulties, literacy among Kenyan women has greatly improved over the last thirty years. For example, in 1970 the illiteracy rate among women was 74%; in 2000 it had reduced to 24%. (Men's illiteracy rates also went down, from 44% to 11%.) It is important to observe that the majority of illiterate people work in the agricultural sector in the rural areas.

For meaningful discussion about technology literacy it is important to take account of facilities and opportunities that are available to rural women, and acknowledge the technology environment. The teledensity in Kenya is 1 line for every 100 people (Kenya's population is 30 million people). The divide between urban and rural services is evident in the fact that there are 4 fixed telephone lines per 100 people in urban areas, while there are only 0.16 lines per 100 people in rural areas. There are 950,000 mobile cellular subscribers, and 60 Internet service providers.

Sources: World Bank (http://www.worldbank.org/afr/gender/kenya.pdf) and the Communications Commission of Kenya (http://www.cck.go.ke/telecomu/tele.htm).

The technological landscape summarized in the box on this page is grim, with the majority of Kenyan households living on equivalent of US$1 per day. Yet due to the efficiency of modern communications and globalization, households are continually bombarded with advertisements for goods that the majority of the population, with

limited financial resources, cannot afford. Women's efforts continually focus on how to improve future prospects for their children through education, health and nutrition, economic self-sufficiency, shelter, and security. In Kenya these are some of the strongest motivating factors that dictate value changes, as well as what women do and the decisions they make.

Women take risks with regard to their individual decisions to probe for opportunities since their statuses in society are already marginal. For example, when a woman invests hard-earned petty cash in technology; walks or pays for public transport to the nearest trading center where there is electricity, telephone or a cyber café at which to learn how to get information or to communicate with the rest of the world; and when she sets aside time to use the facilities, leaving her domestic chores unattended at the risk of conflict with family members—at each step she is taking a risk. For these women in survival mode, technology must be packaged and framed to maximize utility in meeting their immediate needs, be demystified, and be presented in language women can relate to.

Case 1: The Solar Oven

Six years ago I (Penninah Ogada) bought a solar oven, very excited at being able to combine other domestic chores with food cooking and without the need to shed tears caused by the smoke from wood fuel. My pots are clean, but best of all, my fuel is free, abundant, sustainable, and environment friendly . . . or so I thought. Additionally, no formal learning or training is required to use solar power for cooking and rural women can easily learn by seeing. I have no doubt that the development of solar home appliances for the tropics is a viable project with an available market. But years later I wish the developers had considered social practices and the expectations of African communities around food so that the oven could be compatible with the type and quantity of food, as well as with the methods of cooking. This would make more women and their families turn to solar-powered cooking appliances. As this technology was developed and marketed, the size of solar oven and the quantity of food I can cook at a time is not compatible with the average family size and the number of people that eat a meal in a household. This is why I don't use my solar oven—because I do not want to appear to be selfish with my food.

Many development projects have rightfully targeted rural women with project activities designed to produce quantifiable outcomes for documentation and accountability to the donors. Such projects become a "quick fix" for economic woes, but when they come to an end they are then forgotten just as quickly, leaving the beneficiary population demoralized and with more difficult choices about the future than before. Cases abound where expensive technology is in storage—like my solar oven—because of incompatibility with social practices. This must be minimized. Appropriate technology should be judged on its affordability, convenience, and compatibility with locally available skills and other physical realities of the user population and habitat.

Case 2: GDI's Embryonic Partnership with the University of Nairobi

One problem that women and girls live with in Kenyan educational institutions is sexual harassment. In spite of the modernization taking place all around them, women are still

practically held prisoners by some practices within the male-dominated cultural milieu. In response to recent cases of deaths of female students in university hostels at the hands of boyfriends, and the HIV/AIDS devastation, this collaborative initiative is aimed at sensitizing the university community about the forms sexual harassment can take and the negative impacts it has on girls' education.

During the conceptualization of this joint initiative, we at GDI have been struck by the amount of effort, time, and good will such an initiative requires from all parties involved. The three-party partnership involves the active participation of the university leadership, faculty, staff, and students; GDI at EDC; and the funding agency as the third partner.

Gender and equity concerns are both sensitive and volatile issues in Kenya as they are in other African countries. Many people who are gender proponents are professionals in other disciplines, but get involved in gender advocacy out of personal conviction. There is also a growing number of individuals and institutions who incorporate "gender language" for economic correctness in their relations with the donor community. In the end, the level of commitment to the common course is murky, especially where donor funds and the attendant accountability are involved.

Meeting as professionals, but as social strangers to one another, the big challenges we have faced are linked to cross-cultural communication against the background of cultural mindset, economic and political interests, and commitment to educational standards, human rights and development issues. Questions have included By whose standards are gender-fair practices to be judged? How does one craft the definition of gender terminology for cross culturally shared meanings? How does one professional convince another that cultural hegemony is not their intent?

As the partnership and project activities move forward we anticipate further challenges during discussions about gender components to the various syllabi. But the greatest challenge seems to lie with culturally sanctioned habits and practices, even among faculty and those who are identified as agents for change, in both their professional practices and private lives.

We look forward to documenting both the process of change itself and what it feels like for the participants as both agents and subjects of this change. GDI will jointly undertake the documenting exercise as participant observers of equal status with the University of Nairobi, and we will be keen to share how lessons learned can inform current approaches to international relations and development initiatives.

Latin America and the Technology Infrastructure

In Latin America, while there is a growing concern to integrate a gender perspective into public policy, addressing the gender issues around technology access and use is in the beginning stages. The CEPAL study cited earlier highlights the importance in Latin America and the Caribbean of addressing the issues around gender, technology, and development from more than just the access issue. It identifies the major obstacle to realizing the positive potential impacts from new technologies as the lack of information

available on them in the region, and especially the lack of information on how ICTs can help women reach their goals. The report highlights the importance of developing policy around regulation and democratization of information technologies and, importantly, working on the collective imagination on the role ICTs can play in changing social roles and a future vision for the region (Bonder, 2002, p. 6).

Without specific and affirmative work to provide access and engage women and girls not only in learning how to use ICTs, but in designing and creating new tools and envisioning their power for change, the tendency, however, is for the "technology divide" to reproduce the existing income divide and the gender divide in development. Currently, Internet literacy and use is strongly linked to literacy, both because the Net is so predominantly text-based and because globally, and in Latin America, Internet users are predominantly from populations that are better educated and wealthier. Specific action is needed to focus on women, and especially rural and poor women, to avoid reproducing their existing marginalization in the technological realm as well.

The following two cases look at technological literacy in different ways, and are relevant to this discussion on collaboration concerning technological literacy.

Costa Rica's Technology Environment

Costa Rica stands as a unique country in Central America, and views itself as different from its neighbors in many respects. It has consistently been ranked high in human development in UNDP reports. The most recent report (2001) ranks it 41 out of 162 countries in terms of its social indicators. With a stable democracy and no standing army, the country has historically been able to invest in a significant way in education and health care, leading it to place among much richer countries in these areas. Though the country suffered serious declines in these areas in the economic crisis of the 1980s and the structural adjustment programs of the 1980s and 1990s, it still places very favorably within Latin America.

The adult literacy rate is 95.5% (UNDP, 2001, p. 14), with only a tenth of a percentage point difference between rates for women and men. It spends 22.8% of its government expenditures on public education, with 40.2% going to pre-primary and primary, and the rest being roughly divided between secondary and terciary levels (p. 170).

Costa Rica is listed as a "potential leader"* in the UNDP's 2001 Technology Achievement Index (UNDP, 2001)—36 out of 72 ranked countries (90 were unranked because of significant missing data). The same report cites Costa Rica as an example of success in establishing a broad technology strategy "in partnership with other key stakeholders" (pp. 5-6), and indeed the country has begun such progressive measures as declaring a goal for providing free community Internet access, and providing each Costa Rican with an e-mail account and free Internet access for 10 minutes a day. While government policy on development and ICTs is generally progressive, the infrastructure issues are still pressing, which many Costa attribute to the fact that the communications Ricans infrastructure is still a largely governmental monopoly.

In terms of technology infrastructure and facilities, in 2000 Costa Rica had 4.1 Internet hosts per 1,000 people. In 1999 there were 239 mainline and cellular phone lines per 1,000 people. Though

*Potential leaders are described as generally having "invested in high levels of human skills and have diffused old technology widely, but innovate little." In the case of Costa Rica, it ranks low in technology creation, as well as in diffusion of Internet hosts and telephones per capita, but ranks well in high- and medium-technology exports and human skills.

Case 3: An Inter-American Forum on the Role of Education in Preventing Gendered Violence

In February 2002 GDI convened a forum entitled "The Role of Education in Preventing Gender-based Violence." This inter-American exchange on gendered violence prevention initiated

an ongoing discussion around this topic. GDI's primary partner in this work has been the Universidad de Costa Rica in San José, Costa Rica. With the Centro de Investigaciones en Estudios de la Mujer at the university, GDI co-hosted the two-day forum in Costa Rica and brought together 26 practitioners and researchers who work in the field of gendered violence to talk about their vision of the role of education in this work, lessons learned from practice, and their principal challenges and ongoing questions. Participants came from ten countries and each shared a brief reflection on their work, and engaged in discussions throughout the two days. The goal of the forum was to learn from each other and discuss ways that different approaches and new partnerships might inform and enrich our work—thus new technologies were seen as principally a tool that would help us in certain aspects of this work. One of the values of the forum to the topic of this paper is that we did some small group work on defining what a productive and respectful collaboration would look like between the U.S. or Canada and a Latin American country. Some of the suggestions included the need to avoid a traditional "funder"-"funded" approach, and the need for collaborators from richer countries to take the time to understand and learn from work in the South.

Costa Rica's Technology Environment (Cont.)

there seems some sincere intent to strengthen infrastructure, government bureaucracy, economic limitations, and occasionally corruption undercut many of these measures. For example, an August 2002 newspaper article describes the lack of maintenance on community computers available in each post office, the fact that only 45 of the country's 130 post offices ever actually offered the service (which was suppose to be universal), the suspension of the free e-mail and Internet service once for lack of interest among the population and a second national project because of economic problems due to the dot.com crisis with the government contractor. A new plan was announced in August 2002 to attempt these services once again. Another program to bring high speed Internet access to the country is currently encountering bureaucratic obstacles within the government communications monopoly that are yet to be worked out. While state-promoted programs for infrastructure and access encounter ongoing problems, cybercafes are providing some of this access for those who can pay for the service and who have access to these sites. But the market will never address ICT access and integration for those in the population who could most benefit from development benefits that these tools could offer.

In sum, though the country has some infrastructure issues, and access is by no means universal or equitable at present, there is a political and social will to continue to address the development of infrastructure and human capability around ICT access and use. The government sees ICTs as valuable in economic and social development, and a basic infrastructure exists. This makes the country an excellent site in which to consider development of technology literacy programs, including ICTs, and especially those programs that focus on populations that are currently marginalized.

In order to foster continued communication and hopefully support ongoing discussion and collaboration, we developed and implemented a bilingual electronic discussion list for forum participants following the event. This discussion list was suggested by a few participants at the forum, and has been developed and co-facilitated by GDI and the participant from Honduras. The discussion is in English and Spanish—every message posted is bilingual—and every participant but one, who did not have access to reliable Internet services, is subscribed. So far we have had one online panel discussion on symbolic violence and the social construction of gender violence, in which two panelists

explored and discussed the issue, and responded to a few questions and commentaries by other subscribers.

Case 4: Internet Literacy for Rural Women in Costa Rica
The second project, an Internet literacy project for rural women, is being developed with FUNDECOR, a Costa Rican nongovernmental organization focused on ensuring that the conservation of natural resources and development can coexist. FUNDECOR is committed to initiatives that involve technology transfer when technology can work to increase currently marginalized populations involvement and contributions to development activities, and foster connection and organization within those populations.

This internet literacy initiative, which is still be designed and developed, will be a program developed for the women FUNDECOR works with, who are rural based and see the development of micro-business around sustainable harvest from forests as addressing immediate survival needs. Our goal is to teach basic Internet skills while at the same time showing and encouraging women to discover for themselves some of the uses that these skills and the information technology might have for them—addressing the current lack of information on how ICTs can help women reach their goals (Bonder, 2002, p. 6). We intend to utilize a modified popular education approach, and a gender perspective will be integrated throughout the training program and curriculum itself.

Though this initiative is very much in the development phase, and we are "feeling out" the collaboratory relationship between GDI and FUNDECOR, the experience is already helping us to reflect on what collaboration means. For example, GDI is a small institute within a larger U.S.-based nonprofit organization. GDI works consciously to build and implement projects with a gender perspective. FUNDECOR, on the other hand, is a small NGO with the mission of promoting the conservation of forests in Costa Rica through linking public and private interests. Their underlying philosophy is that sustainable development is compatible with protecting national resources. Because of the compatible, but different organizational missions, in the process of negotiating the collaboration and of seeking funding, we are having challenging discussions around the concrete issues we choose to prioritize with this project.

Prior relationships help—we have been able to build on an already existing a sense of trust and understanding among the people involved that is greatly aiding the fairly quick move to action. This does not mean that developing this trust and understanding in the process is impossible, only that getting to "know" each other is important and has to be built into the process if it is not there to start with.

The Lessons: What We Have Learned about Collaboration from Practice
At GDI we recognize the capacity of our target populations to participate in finding answers to their needs, and to conceptualize new initiatives after the initial project goals have been met. Three objectives underlie our approach: (1) To create opportunities for our partners to assess their needs and their capacities to find solutions. (2) To acknowledge local knowledge and expertise, while exercising our confidence in partners' active role as equals. (3) To provide learning opportunities for all partners in the

development process—i.e., respect the 'give and take' among collaborators. GDI's approach is informed by the desire to facilitate a change process that is owned by the subject population, to be a participant observer to the process of change, and to be able to document the experience as well as the outcomes. In this way each participant contributes, owns the process, and can go a step further to customize the outcomes to answer to their specific circumstances and needs.

Perhaps one of the most strongly felt lessons we are learning is that collaboration can have many different forms, and that participants need to be flexible in designing what would be most appropriate in a given context, and with the level of effort that participants are willing to invest. With this in mind, we would like to share the following reflections.

Who Are You Collaborating With?

One of the most important aspects of a successful partnership or other collaboration is who is at the table. Upfront time devoted to sharing visions and priorities, areas of knowledge and skill, and exploring personal compatibility have tended to pay off farther down the line many times over. We have also found that at least in these cases, having a prior relationship between participants in the initiative aids the process and the trust building that has to be at the foundation of a collaborative project. Another aspect that we are facing with the Internet literacy project is the meshing of organizational missions and goals. While the gendered violence work is between gender-aware organizations, and the commitment to end gendered violence was shared a priori, the fit between FUNDECOR and GDI is one that has had to be explored and discussed. FUNDECOR primarily self-identifies as a conservation/human development nonprofit, while GDI is a gender-focused institute within an education nonprofit. While we intuitively feel that the fit is good and our goals are compatible, we are attempting in the development phase to be forthright about our priorities and assumptions. For example, one of GDI's concerns is that technological literacy among the women we will work with should be linked to the possibility of using that technology to connect with others, express views and be listened to, and to question and evolve relationships in their community—in other words be linked to social change.

It can even be beneficial to look at the individuals within the organizations to ensure a good working relationship. For example, the director of the CIEM at the Universidad de Costa Rica turned out to be an especially valuable participant because she was experienced in "working the system" within the university and knew how to avoid getting bogged down in institutional bureaucracy, and when to suggest working outside the institutional system.

In our collaborative projects we also make a big effort to acknowledge areas of experience and knowledge, while avoiding falling into the trap of "expertismo," as a Costa Rican colleague called it. There are larger questions around who might be qualified to call themselves an expert on something, but the usual result of these kinds of labels is to dismiss indigenous knowledge and experiential knowledge, and to assign different levels of power based on the types of knowledge that one brings to the table.

This is seen also in the negotiations we are currently having with the University of Nairobi around institutional roles.

Why Are You Collaborating?

Though the "why" would seem a foundational question upon which to build, we are sometimes surprised when there is not a shared understanding on the response to this. We therefore advocate verbalizing this from the perspectives of both/all parties. It is fairly simple to articulate overt goals, like we want to create a space in which practitioners can reflect on and share experiences, and identify points of connection for further discussions. It is important, however, to openly state everyone's expectations about the project. Saying publicly that I want to get at least one staffperson's time covered and to expand the Institute's portfolio in international initiatives may be harder to do socially, but it is vital in helping the other collaborator(s) understand and respect some aspects of the project that you may feel are vital.

In addition, it is helpful to identify why the project may be improved for the involvement of the different parties. One of the issues raised at the inter-American forum was the proposal made by one group that in developing alliances, we should look both for the points we have in common and for the unique specificities that each party offers to the process. For example, in preparing the forum we felt that the Universidad de Costa Rica was a respected institution both in Costa Rica and outside in Latin America, and was already active in Latin American networks that would aid them in recruiting knowledgeable people in the field. They also had the institutional structure and facilities to provide a meeting space and commit a significant portion of in-kind services to the initiative. We felt that GDI brought such strengths as a strong reputation within the U.S. from having worked in the education field on this issue and had national contacts with practitioners who were doing innovative and diverse types of work around prevention. Last, but certainly not least, we could also bring a small amount of financing to cover the costs for the event and publication of proceedings.

How Are You Collaborating?

This is a process question that is vital to think about and discuss with collaborators. We work to discuss and then lay out in writing what each organization will contribute to the process. This should go from "big picture" types of contributions right down to the nitty-gritty. With the inter-American forum, we did a letter of agreement in which we described the forum and plans, and listed what each organization would contribute to the process. This listing of contributions, however, can range from an informal letter or e-mail message to a legal document. The agreement and negotiations with the University of Nairobi have been much more formal, with legal departments involved in reviewing the agreements being considered and the commitments that would be made on each side.

We have found funding to be one of the most challenging aspects of collaborating for a range of reasons. For example, if staff time is being covered, how does one work with the vast differences in salaries between the U.S. and countries like Kenya and Costa Rica, which are tied to large differences in the cost of living? In addition, many U.S. and other organizations, even nonprofits, measure success by the amount of funding that one brings

into the organization, and there is a strong institutional push to be, for example, the main contractor working with subcontracts, or to have funding run through the U.S. organization in some way. While the subject may be difficult to talk about openly—and often it is with women's groups, and especially so for those organizations that hold the money—doing so greatly aids the development of trust. We have not found an easy or perfect way to manage the funding of collaborative projects, but continue to explore and test—in doing so we try to be upfront about financing and address questions and concerns openly.

As GDI, and our larger organization, operates on soft money, and we must raise outside funding for all projects, we also find that we need to explain and repeatedly clarify the funding situation with other organizations that may not have much experience working with our type of organization. We have found a tendency when we work with smaller organizations in other countries for them to see us more in the role of funders than in the position of colleagues who in addition have some skill in obtaining funding. While both parties who collaborated on the inter-American forum discussed the fact that GDI wanted to invest a small amount of financing to cover costs, with the expectation that this would allow us to better develop and seek funding for activities and projects arising out of that exchange, we struggled consistently against falling into the more traditional model of rich country "donor" and Latin American country "doer."

We have also seen the central role that communications plays in collaborative relationships, and also the challenges that it poses across cultures and geographic sites. For us, part of the joys and rewards of collaboration are the relationships that develop and the give and take that occurs in the process. One has to constantly remember differences between cultures in the values placed on such qualities as speed, efficiency, conciseness, personal relationships, courtesy, and so on. The communication process has to take all of this into account and work to maintain or strengthen the collaborative relationship as well as to communicate information and move projects forward.

Finally, if the collaboration is being developed into a project with a concrete lifespan, it is important to discuss and understand what will happen when the project ends. This is more than just sustainability issues, in that if a collaborative relationship is developed, what is the commitment of each organization, and even the people in them, to the project participants and the other collaborating organizations once funding ends. One of the issues raised at our forum by several Latin American participants was the problems with outside groups coming in and then simply leaving, which still appears to be common in international (and even domestic) projects. Several participants raised the importance of taking the time to know each other and all parties beginning to understand the political, cultural, and social complexities of each setting—only with this investment is a truly collaborative effort possible.

In Closing

This paper has described briefly how a collaborative approach underlies our international work on technology literacy, and shared some of our successes and struggles in implementing this approach. We anticipate additional challenges as the initiatives

continue and develop, but we look forward to the learning we will gain, and the change we hope to witness.

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Suggested Citation:

Flansburg, Sundra, and Penninah Ogada. "Models for Change: Collaboration as the Foundation for Promoting Technology Literacy with Women." Paper presented at the AAUW Educational Foundation Symposium "International Perspectives: Global Voices for Gender Equity," Washington, DC, November 16, 2002. (http://www.edc.org/GDI/publications/ModelsforChange.pdf).