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Under Pressure: Canadian NGOs and the Influences of Public Perception and Government Funding: A Case Study of Pueblito Canada

By

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Abstract

Under Pressure: Canadian NGOs and the Influences of
Public Perception and Government Funding.
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NGOs have seen their numbers and role in international development expand dramatically post World War II. Funding flowed in from the general public, as well as from government coffers as the apparent success of these organizations infiltrated public conscience and will. The heyday of support they received in the 1970s and 1980s, however, has given way to magnified scrutiny and demands from all sides today. Two specific pressures on NGOs are examined in this practicum report: the influences of a public undereducated and often misled in general issues of international development, and an increased dependence on funding from the federal government which in turn is responsible to the taxpayer. In order to survive in the current international aid climate, small Canadian NGOs must find ways in which to effectively incorporate these demands without compromising mission or programs. This paper is an examination of how, and the extent to which the case study, Pueblito Canada has been able to do this.

Regina Shannon

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Chapter One

Introduction to Practicum Study

NGOs have seen their numbers and role in international development expand dramatically. Recent estimates tell us that in 2000 there were approximately 35,000 NGOs working internationally, compared to the estimates of 176 such organizations nearly a century ago (Edwards, 2000, p. 3). The roles of many of these organizations have shifted from the frequent origins of providing relief and welfare services to include larger scale political ambitions of influencing policy or mobilizing social movements. And their popularity has soared. Without the bureaucracy and power-hungry image of government, and with more heart than business, NGOs enjoyed a heyday of support from the 1970s through to the 1990s. They became the favoured child of official aid, the magic bullet to dodge all pitfalls and reach the poor. Funding flowed in from the general public, as well as from government coffers as the apparent success of these organizations infiltrated public conscience and will.

Rose-coloured glasses of thirty years ago have given way to magnified scrutiny today. Questions are being asked and explanations demanded as awareness grows with the public that much money is being spent and new NGOs spring up each year requesting our support, but the same horrific images meet us with each additional plea for funds. NGOs are being criticized for lack of accountability and poor management of their finances and resources. They are being attacked for their growing dependence on government dollars and the resulting impacts on organizational policy and programming. Even their much lauded capability to represent and ability to reach the poor is questioned.

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Amplifying this problem is the lack of education in the north about the amount of time and work required for development to gain a foothold in a community, much less improve the standard of living in a sustainable manner.

It is therefore the intention of this paper, this culmination of two years' study and eight months' work experience, to examine how all this impacts a small Canadian non-governmental organization based in Toronto and its subsequent ability to manage these pressures. To accomplish this task, a survey of academic literature on the role and structure of NGOs, as well as how the changes in political climate affect them will provide the context through which the case study can be analyzed. The organization's policies and programs, as well as the activities in which I participated during my time there will be discussed in light of two prominent trends which are inherently related: First, a public undereducated and often misled in general issues of international development assistance; second, an increased dependence on funding from the federal government, which in turn is accountable to the taxpayer. Given this reality for NGOs, is it possible for these organizations to manage these external influences without compromising their core principles? In order to survive in the current international aid climate, small Canadian NGOs must find ways in which to effectively incorporate the demands of both a skeptical public and a government increasingly under scrutiny to defend its funding decisions while not compromising the mission and programs of the organization. What follows in this paper is an examination of how, and the extent to which the case study, Pueblito Canada, has been able to do this.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Defining the Ambiguous

NGO activity in northern countries can trace its origins back to 19th century overseas religious missions, and to the founding of the Red Cross, a secular organization, during the same time period (Van Rooy, 2000, p. 302). The modern NGO movement, however, began post WWI, and truly began to take shape with the post-war relief and reconstruction efforts after the Second World War. Many of the larger, better known NGOs such as CARE, Foster Parents Plan, Medicins Sans Frontiers, Save the Children, and World Vision can trace their roots back to conflict, and many Canadian NGOs in turn began as offshoots of these larger, often British or American organizations. Each of the above has a Canadian chapter; others include the Aga Khan Foundation Canada, Christian Children's Fund, War Child and Oxfam. Currently approximately one-quarter of Canadian NGOs are branches of such parent organizations (Smillie & Helmich, 1999, p.72). Other smaller homegrown NGOs emerged around the same time to help fill in the gaps in social welfare around the globe as awareness of the desperate need for development efforts grew. The organization examined in this paper for example, Pueblito Canada, was founded in 1974, working with needy children and their communities in Costa Rica.

NGOs were originally appreciated for their skill in managing emergency relief efforts. However, nearing the end of the 1970s, as it became apparent that the growth

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and modernization development plans of the 1970s were not succeeding, governments began to realize the development skills that these organizations offered as well. NGOs were praised for their ability to create innovative programs in areas including primary health care, education and basic services. Funding opportunities increased for organizations in Canada and around the globe because of this, and in turn, so did their numbers. The matching grants programs of the 1960s, the subsequent thematic funds and the bilateral contracts popular among OECD countries including Canada each contributed to the rise of new NGOs, and the refocusing and expanding of the interest areas of others (Smillie & Helmich, 1999, p.9).

Given their sheer numbers and broad range of work areas, NGOs today are difficult to categorize. Their activities include emergency and relief efforts, education, infrastructure building, and advocacy at the local and international level. Some strive to change the capitalist system, while others find they are able to accomplish their goals within it. But no matter what area they work in or the size of the organization, the ability of NGOs to reach the micro level, the poor, while being able to challenge the macro level through consciousness raising and political lobbying, plays an important part in helping reduce poverty.

This section will look at current literature surrounding the terms, structure and stages of growth of maturity which generally define an NGO. The term is often used to describe a plethora of organizations working domestically and internationally. Given that Pueblito Canada operates in service delivery and advocacy work overseas, the theory behind this study will focus on non-government, voluntary sector organizations involved

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in the field of international development. More specific details as to the structure and operations of such organizations will follow.

Beginning with the term itself, there is a copious number of acronyms used to describe like organizations. NGDO (Non-Governmental Development Organization) is commonly used by Alan Fowler (1997). CSO (Civil Society Organization), is often used by USAID to encompass both the organizations dealt within this paper as well as more informal associations and networks. Ian Smillie (1995, p. 34) provides a roster of other terms used throughout the world including: PDO (Private Development Organization), NPO (Non-Profit Organization), Volag (Voluntary Agency), PVO (Private Voluntary Organization), PVDO (Private Voluntary Development Organization), all of which describe organizations like the case study. He includes other commonly heard terms such as CBO (Community-Based Organization) and GRO (Grass-Roots Organization), which while also important to recognize, are usually used to describe small village organizations in developing countries rather than the international organizations dealt with in this paper. This paper will therefore use the acronym NGO to represent organizations analogous to the case study (non-government, voluntary organizations working in the field of international development) while recognizing that many alternative terms are used by various academics and agencies to describe similar associations.

Moving on to the structure these organizations demonstrate, Smillie (1995) points out that NGOs are good at determining what they aren't: besides being non-governmental and non-profit, they are "not bureaucratic, not rigid, not directive, and not stultifying of local initiative" (p.36). The debate as to how accurate these descriptions are

shall be left to a later discussion. What is important to note is that this once again focuses on the negatives, rather than what the organizations actually do.

For this study, the essential components of the case study are best described through the blending of two definitions from the literature. First, a study from John Hopkins University provides five criteria organizations must meet to be considered an NGO. An NGO must be 1) formal: institutionalized to some extent; 2) private: separate from government institutionally, although it may receive funding from government coffers; 3) non profit-distributing: financial surplus does not go to owners or directors of the organization; 4) self governing: controls and manages its own activities; 5) voluntary: demonstrate a "meaningful degree of voluntary participation in the conduct or management of the organization" (Smillie, 1995, p.33). The composition of Pueblito is captured in the above criteria. It is a registered organization, institutionally separate from government, yet receiving a portion of its financial support from government funds (criteria 1 and 2). It is a non-profit organization, its work grounded in the desire of staff and volunteers to improve the lives of the organization's beneficiaries (criteria 3). Finally, the organization is governed by a volunteer board of directors and has a roster of volunteers involved in its outreach activities, which fulfill criteria 4 and 5.

What is lacking however, is the focus on development work in the definition and for this we turn to an additional set of criteria by Fowler. His base definition is similar although not identical to the Hopkins study (the major differences shall be discussed shortly): an NGO has no profit surplus going to owners and staff; it must be a voluntary initiative; independent from government, self-governing and formal to some degree. It is the additional four criteria focused on development work which are of particular interest

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to this paper. The organization must be i) legitimized by the existence of poor and powerless; ii) acting as an intermediary, not mutually benefiting; iii) hybrid in nature and iv) working towards sustainable development via voluntary principles (Fowler, 1997, p.38). Pueblito is legitimized by the poverty of the communities it works with and the work is not mutually benefiting: Pueblito channels funds and know-how to its southern partners, working as an intermediary, but with the beneficiaries of the efforts located in the South. Like Fowler's criteria, it is a hybrid organization, evolving with the needs of each community. Its programs fall under the social development priorities within the Canadian International Development Agency's framework for sustainable development (Canadian International Development Agency [CIDA], 2000, appendix 1).

Many elements of the Hopkins study and Fowler's base definition are similar at first glance. Both speak of being non-profit, volunteer aspects, being independent from government, self-governing and formal. The strength of the Hopkins study, however, is in its language regarding funding and volunteerism. It asserts that NGOs can be separate from government while still receiving public funding. Pueblito, like most NGOs, receives an increasing percentage of its financial contributions from the government. How this affects the work will be discussed in chapter 2, section 3.2. What is important to note at this point is that the Hopkins study acknowledges and incorporates this trend into the definition; Fowler's definition omits it. The Hopkins study also gains ground in its recognition of different possible voluntary contributions, while Fowler again leaves this aside. This ambiguity in the definitions is common in the literature, and highlights the difficulty in casting a specific set of criteria over such a broad range of organizations.

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A definition by Edwards also merits examination, although it will become clear why the above two definitions are best suited to this paper. This definition states that an NGO must a) be formally registered with the government, b) receive a percentage of their income from voluntary contributions and government grants, and c) be governed by a board of trustees (Edwards, 2000, p. 8). While useful in defining NGOs in a general sense, and able to cover a broad range of organizations from large transnational NGOs to smaller homegrown organizations, this definition again does not describe the specific kind of NGO the case study represents; that is, a non-governmental, voluntary organization working in the field of international development. It fails to mention being non-profit distributing or independent from government, critical elements of Pueblito's structure. It also places the emphasis on volunteer financial contributions and not the other ways volunteerism is incorporated into the day to day functions of NGOs. Finally, it doesn't point out the special considerations of an organization working in development efforts overseas.

For the purposes of this paper then, the Hopkins study definition is most appropriate, with the addition of Fowler's four development-focused criteria. The former captures the structure of certain NGOs such as our case study (being formal, independent while still receiving government funding, non-profit distributing, self-governing and voluntary) while the latter acknowledges both the rationale for the organization's existence and its founding principles. Together they best define organizations like the case study, Pueblito, involved in international development assistance, service delivery and public advocacy at home and abroad.

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Based on the definition above, the literature on how the work these organizations do and the manner in which they operate evolves over the years may now be explored. Much research has been done on how the relief and welfare projects of early NGO work compare to the political roles taken on in today's ever changing environment. In the early 1990s, David Korten's research on the four generations of NGOs presented a new way of thinking about the way these organizations evolve. Much like the growth and modernization theory of development analysis, he provided a very linear explanation of the four stages an NGO would pass through as it matured. The first is relief and welfare services, demonstrated by the organizations which often appear in post-conflict situations to assist survivors. Save the Children, The Red Cross, Oxfam, and World Vision represent some of the best known organizations who owe their origins to this type of work[1]. The second is self-reliant local development, where local communities no longer rely on an outside party to provide goods and services. The third level of maturation is when organizations acquire influence over broader policy framework, lobbying for change to unfair or stifling domestic and international policies. The fourth rarely seen stage is the evolution into a social movement or people's development movement (Korten, 1990, p.113). The problem comes with trying to categorize many mature NGOs which do not follow this path: for example, none of the large NGOs mentioned above have left the relief work behind as they 'graduated' to the next level. Furthermore, some

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[1] The Red Cross was founded in 1863 to help the wounded after the War of Italian Reunification; Save the Children Fund in 1919 as a response to atrocities suffered by children in Germany and Austria during the First World War; Oxfam (1942) and CARE (1946) were both founded to aid civilians in war-torn Europe post WWII; and War Child in 1993 as a response to the effects conflict in Yugoslavia was having on children there.

more recent NGOs have jumped right into stage two or three while still working

concurrently at the relief and welfare stage[2].

Smillie also speaks of four evolutionary stages or generations, similar to Korten.

He, however, focuses on the internal evolution of an organization rather than the policies

and programs which emanate from that evolution. Smillie's stages are, in order:

community based voluntarism, with personal involvement in delivering services;

institutionalization, as a result of the growth of the organization; likewise the next stage,

professionalization, also becomes necessary to meet the growing demand for services.

What he deems the epitome is a "type of welfare state, where NGOs cease to be

necessary because all physical and social needs are deemed critical by society and are

being met by the state" (Smillie, 1995, p.34).

In Smillie's world, however, these stages are neither hierarchical nor linear. One

is not superior to the prior, and they can flow one to the next, back and forth.

Organizations may be involved at more than one level. Like Korten, he sees northern

NGOs and society rarely reaching the fourth stage.

Both these studies are applicable to the situation of NGOs as defined in this

section, provided that a linear evolution or hierarchy of stages is not demanded. In

reality, it seems like neither of these theories exhibit growth stages, but rather move back

and forth in and out of focus like a continuum, depending on need and resources.

From the literature reviewed above, a general framework has been created of the

term, structure and growth or maturation continuum of NGOs through which to view the

place of Canadian NGOs in the international aid arena. The definition chosen, from

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[2] Examples of these organizations include Development and Peace (1967), the Aga Khan
Foundation (1967); Human Rights Watch (1978), and Mines Action Canada (1997).

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among the plethora of terms commonly heard, represents non-government, voluntary organizations involved in the field of international development. The structure of such organizations must meet the following criteria: it must be formal, independent from government, non-profit distributing, self-governing, and voluntary. These organizations are legitimized by the existence of poor and powerless, often act as an intermediary, are hybrid in nature, and are involved in sustainable development initiatives. They must also demonstrate that they are in some sense voluntary, institutionalized, and professional, and show gradual maturity from a focus on provision of relief and welfare assistance to influence over broader policy. Later in this paper the subsequent challenges to the structure and stage of these organizations will be examined. At this point though, it is necessary to look at the changing international political climate and how this has affected the prospects for NGOs as defined in the previous sections.

2.2 The International Aid Arena: A Neo-liberal Agenda and the Opportunities for NGOs

The substantial increase in numbers of NGOs working internationally in the last century, and particularly in the last thirty years, demonstrates that they have become a voice to be heard and a political force to be reckoned with. This is evidenced by the growing environmental movement, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (made up of 1400 NGOs around the globe), and recent demonstrations against the WTO and other international trade organizations (Edwards & Hulme, 1995, p. 2; VanRooy, 2000, p. 303).

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This growth began during the rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s where international cooperation was guided by free market economics and liberal democratic capitalism. Together these elements were a conscious move away from the pro-Keynesian policies of state instigated economic growth. Neoliberalism is embodied by privatization, decentralization, and a belief in the free market. Supporting the premises of capitalism and the retrenchment of the state, governments took on a minimal role in the economy, allowing private enterprise and the market to run their course with minimal interference. The periphery, those whose needs were not met through this arrangement often fell to the wayside. Social organizations stepped in to fill the gap, providing basic necessities and a platform for the disenfranchised (Edwards & Hulme, 1995, p.2).

This resulted in a retrenchment by donor states away from direct social assistance and a channeling of funds through select organizations instead. The rationale behind this is embedded in neoliberal economic philosophy which emphasizes and believes that the best, most competitive organizations will provide services more efficiently and strategically than those governments could themselves. In fact, these organizations became, according to critics, "the preferred channel for service provision in deliberate substitution for the state" (Edwards & Hulme, 1995, p.2). It is worth noting that by doing so, the most difficult aspects of providing micro level services on the ground: reaching remote areas, and reaching the poorest of the poor, for example, are often left to the organizations. The government focuses its work on the more accessible meso level operations.

Furthermore, this often breeds an unhealthy level of competition among like-minded organizations working on the ground. Instead of pulling together on programs

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which are often complementary, they are instead forced to compete amongst themselves for the same resource pool to ensure their very survival. This has negative effects for all programming in an area: when the "numerator remains static and the denominator grows, the result is not just a lower amount of money for each, but a general weakening of the whole" (Smillie, 2004, p. 23).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, government support of development work done through NGOs increased to a point where in some cases up to 85 per cent of an organization's funding is subsidized by government coffers (Hulme and Edwards, 1997, p.7). While this demonstrates an international trend, it is further evidenced here in Canada by a growing number of organizations who depend almost entirely on the federal government for their financial survival. This is complicated internationally and nationally by the aforementioned escalating competition between organizations, and often a lack of political will to maintain current levels of support depending upon the party in power and the nature of its leadership. Stemming from this reality are problems in public perception and issues of autonomy between organizations and the governments who, by holding the purse strings, are increasingly influential. These will be discussed in the next sections.

2.3 Current Challenges facing NGOs

2.3.1 *Mixed Messages: An Undereducated and Misled Northern Public*

It appears that NGOs and their western constituencies are caught in a time warp. One foot headed into the future, most organizations have moved past the post-conflict relief and welfare activities into a realization that sustainable development entails so much more. Advocacy, policy dialogue, and structural change to oppressive laws are just some of the activities NGOs are now involved in. The problem, however, is that they have left their image and donors behind. Speed, effectiveness and efficiency are still the trademarks NGOs build their marketing campaigns upon to gain public support, despite the fact it is well known in the NGO world that such qualities have no place in true gritty development work. Images of horror and helplessness that exceed reality are still commonplace in the media and therefore the public conscience, even though such images reinforce an air of dependence, are often counter-productive and propagate stereotypes, further complicating most organizations' ability to fundraise on a sustainable basis and spread their message (Smillie, 1995, p.136). If NGOs are doing more than fulfilling the relief and welfare stage of Korten's generations theory, why haven't they brought their image with them? And what effect does this have on their donors?

Quite simply, NGOs have hung on to this archaic image because it works. With greater competition for funds and donors due to the increased number of organizations (Smillie, 1995; Edwards, 1995; Fowler, 1997), the trend in fundraising has continued to be through 'pull at the heartstrings' appeals. "Show babies. All the time show babies

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and more babies," was a British fundraising consultant's formula for effective NGO dealings with the public in 1969 (Smillie, 1995, p.137). This advice seems to weigh in even today, as recent ads from World Vision, Oxfam, and Save the Children splashed out aid appeals featuring war-torn babies and children across the Canadian newspapers in preparation for and in response to the invasion of Afghanistan in 2002, and the war in Iraq in 2003. Capitalizing on emergency efforts, especially those which concern children, is still a lucrative method of obtaining funds. In fact, Alison Van Rooy (2000, p.312) tells us that many NGOs in Canada keep this focus in their campaigns and in their work because they fear that the public would lose interest should they address long-term development work instead of seizing the opportunities provided by the media. Furthermore, to encourage support from the public, NGOs have continued to flaunt speed, effectiveness and efficiency as their comparative advantage over government and business. While these attributes may have accurately described the emergency and relief work NGOs in the past, they do not necessarily hold true today.

Public opinion is changing. The western population is confused by the mixed messages much of the NGO world is sending. If these organizations are as speedy, effective and efficient as they say they are, why the unrelenting horrific images for the last forty years? Where has the money gone? And with so many appeals, how does one choose amongst the proliferating organizations demanding our attention and money? Smillie (1995, p.190) claims that NGOs are now caught in a vicious circle of promising more and more of their trademark speed, effectiveness, and efficiency as more organizations enter the competition. Even if they wanted to change their approach, without feeding into the market in a way they know will work, organizations face

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extinction. For this reason, they continue to make promises, and downplay failures or any inability to meet these promises with slick public relations campaigns. Instead of coordinating responses with other like-minded organizations, each stakes out its own corner of the emergency appeal territory, claiming that its work will reach the needy the fastest, the most effectively and efficiently (Smillie, 1995, p. 125; VanRooy, 2000, p. 312).

Creating such high expectations establishes an "explicit contract" (Fowler, 1997, p.130), as individuals logically expect the organization to make good on the promises from its fundraising campaign. Fowler considers these kinds of funds to be 'hot' funds, tied with emotion and expectation. This approach can, and has backfired. Using the slogan, 'give your gift today, tomorrow may be too late', The Catholic Relief Services in the USA amassed millions of dollars for Ethiopia in the 1980s. Public anger resulted, however, when the media revealed that the funds were sitting unused, accruing interest. With such an urgent fundraising slogan, the organization had created an unwritten contract with donors that precluded a slow, development-oriented approach. Presented or conducted in this way, NGOs are still working at the symptom level, failing to address, or even inform their northern constituents of the deeper underlying issues behind the dire situations (p.133).

As a result, many critics claim that these conflicting messages and uncoordinated demands have left the public apathetic to the issues (Van Rooy, 2000, p.311; Smillie, 1995, p.126). The images have become commonplace in living rooms and on kitchen tables, on television and in the newspaper. Everyone is aware of the problem, and people do respond to especially poignant pleas for help, but being constantly

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overwhelmed with images of despair and calls for money has left the public passive to

the humanity behind the haunting eyes of the picture[3]. Moreover, a feeling of

helplessness resonates amongst the population of the west, as if their voice doesn't count

in international affairs. The Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC)

states that large segments of Canada's population, youth in particular, feel powerless in

international issues, as if decisions are made by 'distant and unaccountable forces' and

their opinions go unheard (Canadian Council for International Cooperation [CCIC],

2004b, p.1).

Better educating the public on development issues and the amount of time and

energy required for sustainable human development in order to gain the trust and support

of the public seems like one way to combat this, but it has proven difficult historically to

carry out successfully. Much time and energy were devoted to development education

following WWII,[4] But to little avail. Perhaps because time and attention spans are short,

disjointed efforts to educate the public - articles, journals and lectures on seemingly

unconnected experiences across the globe - failed to create solidarity between north and

south, or to raise the conscience of northern constituents. Creating awareness, let alone

true understanding amongst donors and potential donors of what real development entails

has proven to be as grueling as the work itself. This explains why organizations have

tended to revert back to the familiar. As such, Power, Maury and Maury (2002) report

that:

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[3] The outpouring of financial support for the victims of the 2004 Tsunami clearly demonstrates this. While no one questions the great need for relief efforts in the area, it is noteworthy that this kind of collective purse opening happens during disasters only, despite general awareness of other international needs: for example, the daily tragedy of HIV/AIDS in Africa.
[4] See Smillie, 1995 and 2002.

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Educating donors about the complexity of international development

seems largely out of fashion among INGOs. What passes for public

education tends to be slanted towards child sponsorship and emergency

appeals. Public relations systems rely on a continuous stream of

uncomplicated success stories that not only obscure community realities

but skip over problems in the performance of the organizations

themselves. (p. 280)

Good public relations rely on success stories, again painting over the harsh realities and

the length of time needed for the work. Van Rooy (2000, p.312) says that the focus on

attaining a broader donor base often affects policies, locking organizations into choosing

aid for emergencies over aid for development.

To combat this, organizations need to "mount continuing efforts to increase

understanding of global processes and peoples" (Smillie, 2002, p.6). He outlines six

crucial factors for successfully educating and engaging the Canadian public on

development issues: *time viability*, the amount of time such an enormous task as

consciousness raising necessitates; *cogency of events*, latching on to events in the media

which underscore the issue, successfully used in emergency aid campaigns; *perceived

applicability to self*, an issue that takes on personal meaning to the constituents;

concreteness and clarity, instead of the daily assault of uncoordinated messages sent by

NGOs, the media and governments which can often be attributed to divergent policies;

credibility, the media still rates as most believable: NGOs fare better than government

agencies; and *publicity*, clear and unambiguous messages, are all necessary parts of

raising public consciousness to international issues (1995, p.142).

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Also, instead of competing against one another for a stake in the public opinion territory, the formation of coalitions has been found successful. NGOs, working together towards a common cause, ensure that the public receives the same message from many sources, both local and international. Blood diamonds, War-Affected Children, and Landmines all demonstrate issues that have been the focus of many organizations working together. Such joining of forces is often the most effective way to promote a cause and change public mindset. In most northern countries, NGOs have seen the benefits of working together, and frequently align themselves with other groups, councils or coalitions. In Canada, this is often done through the Canadian Council for International Cooperation or its provincial subsidiaries. Here organizations can network and find like-minded organizations to work with. They enjoy the added power of strength in numbers when lobbying for policy change and the credibility such coalitions afford (CCIC, 2004a, p.3).

Problems remain, however, even with a strength in numbers approach. First, determining a plan of action between diverse organizations, and especially agreeing upon a focus that does not just appeal to Korten's relief and welfare stage of development still proves difficult. NGOs understand the work needed for true development, but even as a group they can get caught up in the fundraising appeal of a 'hot' topic, without touching the underlying causes. Related to this is the ever present challenge of financial survival and relevance – a 'what's in it for us?' approach that can detract from the organization's original mandate.

A final challenge to consider for all NGOs looking for support from the public, whether it be on their own or as a group is how to get involved with causes that might

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criticize their funders or their lifestyles. While we try to rely on the guaranteed right to freedom of speech in Canada, 'biting the hand that feeds' is never a good idea. Suffice it to say here that finding a balance in development education which successfully challenges government policies, corporations and multilateral institutions and the affluence of the north, while navigating accusations from the media, politicians and the public is treacherous water to tread. Self-censorship and a reluctance to get involved with controversial issues are more likely to occur. This argument will be continued in the next section as the effects of the increasing dependence on government funds are explored.

2.3.2 *Government Funding: At What Cost?*

As explained above, NGOs were seen by the public and government as effective means to reach the poor and marginalized. Their numbers increased due to the change in economic and political thinking, and their popularity with officials as the 'magic bullet'. According to Hulme and Edwards (1997, p.6), as governments channeled more funds directly to these organizations for service provision, an interesting result of all this is that in many northern countries, large organizations such as Save the Children and Oxfam are now better known with the public than Official Development Assistance. This certainly would appear to be the case in Canada, where organizations like Save the Children, Oxfam and the Red Cross are more likely to be mentioned than the Canadian

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International Development Agency itself, despite the funding the agency provides to each[5].

But as their notoriety has increased, so has their dependence on government funding. Fowler (1997) tells us that tax-based aid is a "fast growing source of NGDO funding" (p.137)[6]. Hulme and Edwards (1997) speak of the "high rate of dependency on official funds," and that "channeling funds to NGOs is big business" (p.6). Contributions from the government coffers have skyrocketed from an average of 1.5 percent of NGO operating budgets in the early 1970s to 30 percent in the mid 1990s, with large organizations receiving more and more from official funds. Sweden leads with 85 percent of NGO funds originating from government. For the USA, the figure is 66 percent; in Australia, it is 34 percent. In Canada, the average percentage of NGO income from official government sources is 70 percent, one of the highest percentages in northern countries and demonstrating a growing closeness with government. Research has shown that dependence on government funding forms an increasingly integral part of NGO life in the South as well (Hulme and Edwards, 1997, p.7).

While this kind of funding does help strengthen the financial stability of the organization and increases their access to decision makers, academics are quite clear on the negative implications this kind of government involvement can have on NGOs. Edwards and Fowler (2002) tell us that high vulnerability and low autonomy result from, "Excessive reliance on a single source of funding not controlled by the organization" (p.374). The vulnerability to which they refer here is the ability of the organization to

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[5] Through its bilateral aid through NGOs as well as through the other mechanisms for NGO funding, CIDA channeled $261.5 million Can dollars, or 10.8 percent of its ODA budget to NGOs in 1995-1996.
[6] Fowler's use of the term NGDO is synonymous with our definition in this paper. See chapter 2, section 1.

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survive negative external events, such as loss of funding; autonomy is the ability to say no, or choose a path different from that of the donor. Clearly, with an extremely high percentage of funding to Canadian NGOs coming from the government, these organizations are vulnerable, dependent, and highly susceptible to changing trends in government policy and spending.

Ian Smillie's much quoted quip about Canadian NGOs reaching for the Vitamin C when CIDA sneezes really is no laughing matter (Hulme and Edwards, 1997, p.7). It summarizes the major concern with moving so close to government: money rarely comes without strings attached. As more and more money comes from a single donor, especially one responsible to a variety of constituents, more demands are placed on assessment and accountability. Fowler (1997) tells us that it is "very unusual for donor conditions not to compromise independent organizational decision-making to some degree" (p.130). NGOs are being socialized into the establishment, implementing donor policy, upward accountability, donor definitions of achievement and showing a reduction of diversity in their operations (Hulme and Edwards, 1997, p.7). They begin to resemble government agencies more and more, in structure and operation. Weiss and Gordenker (1996) even question whether NGOs can call themselves voluntary agencies, or should be better titled the "shadow state" (p.19). Adhering to regulations and attaining multi-year agreements becomes the priority for many organizations. Bit by bit, the organization adjusts its projects and policies to ensure sustainable funding, assuming the ideas and norms of the donor. Like the bureaucracy that plagues government offices, NGO operations become bureaucratic, time-bound, predefined, leading to measurable impacts (Van Rooy, 2000, p.316). Changes in donor policy lead to shifts in organizational

mission and structure, again to keep the money flowing (Fowler, 1997, p.130). The aim becomes self-preservation, and true development work, the gritty, time consuming social behaviour changes give way to short term projects, quick visible results and high levels of control. Results Base Management is a good example of this. Started with the USAID and the World Bank, it was quickly adopted by much of the NGO world. While its easily quantifiable results allow for quick and easy reporting, the method has become a bureaucratic nightmare for many development organizations because the rigid nature of RBM reporting doesn't appreciate the fluidity and ever changing environment most development organizations operate in (Smillie, 1995, p.142).

Besides the changes in structure and function, the most negative effect of dependence on government funds is the loss of the radical voice that characterizes NGO work. It is an implicit concern – how to take from the government, while carrying out advocacy activities which might criticize the hand that feeds (Weiss and Gordenker, 1996, p.19). Few NGOs are capable of managing this delicate balance. Jaime Joseph (2000) notes that NGOs are becoming "conservative and uninspired" (p.391). They are losing their social critic capacity, and their ability to respond to and take on political initiatives. Instead, they are being absorbed into the flourishing aid industry, he tells us, becoming an arm of the government, social contractors implementing its will. While many agree, the benefits of a direct relationship with government are the ability to influence public policy and change perceptions[7].

The trend of relying on tax-based funding is not likely to change. Voluntary donations are declining. Globally, it is expected that less than 50 percent of NGO income will be from private contributions by 2010 (Fowler, 1997, p.134). What are NGOs to do

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[7] See Fowler (1997), Hulme & Edwards (1997), and Van Rooy (2000).

in the future? Given the current funding situation in international aid, full autonomy is simply not possible. NGOs operate in an arena governed by states, and democratic government has always been a precursor to opening up space for these organizations to act (Edwards & Hulme, 1995, p.44). Edwards and Hulme sum it up as follows: "NGOs have never been wholly autonomous of other actors or the contexts in which they operate. Autonomy is always relative and shifting" (p.50). Staying true to founding beliefs is critical, says Alan Fowler (1997, p.133). Staying aware of the potential hazards of cooption is even more so.

The pressures of government funding becoming an increasing source of income for NGOs , together with a general public uneducated and skeptical in the work the organizations do, provides an extreme challenge to NGOs' ability to remain true to their missions and programs. Compromising values in order to gain public support or meet the demands of government funding may bring in the money in the short run but as explained above, comes with a host of other problems. The challenge for all NGOs then, is to manage these pressures without conceding core principles. The next section will incorporate the findings of this literature review into a hypothesis and methodology with which to analyze the case study.

It is immediately apparent that the structure and evolutionary stages of NGOs as defined in this chapter are highly susceptible to outside influences. While finances may not affect all aspects of an organization's structure, for example, being non-profit, formal, and private may remain non-negotiable, the idea of self governance may be affected by the dangling of financial carrots. Bluntly stated, an organization may have its own board of trustees governing it, but the extent to which their decisions are motivated by keeping

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the funds rolling is wherein the dilemma lies. The effect this has on the organization's direction or very mission is obvious.

Furthermore, for better or worse, donor demands have led to the professionalization of NGOs in the west. Voluntary, community-based action may be appreciated, but government funds must be accounted for, and governments have to report back to their constituencies that money has been well spent, quickly and efficiently, in a way that will resonate with the public. Strict timelines and regular assessment at short intervals through management tools such as RBM often conflict with the real time and effort needed for true development. Having a desire to help may not be enough, leaving well-meaning people feeling left out or without a voice in the issue.

Certainly the type of work, or evolutionary progression discussed earlier is affected. If funding is available for relief and welfare work, will an organization interested in long-term self-reliant development incorporate emergency relief into their agenda in order to attain the funds? Will their programming change? Will they remain true to their long-term goals? Fitting the money with the mission is a game all NGOs must play in order to survive.

This practicum paper will use the above literature review as a backdrop to analyze one particular NGO, Pueblito Canada. Pueblito is a small NGO based in Toronto, Ontario. Founded in 1974, the organization specializes in early childhood care and development projects for young children in Latin America. I spent seven months at the organization involved in education and fundraising activities. The original learning objectives I set out were both practical and theoretical in nature. They included on a practical level, gaining work experience with an organization focused on children's issues

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in a Latin American context. On a theoretical level, my goals included understanding how development theory affected an NGO's structure, funding and practice. This is where the focus of this paper emerged. Through the quandary of education projects on a minimal budget, seeking funding grants, as well as the daily challenges of managing donors and organizing fundraising projects, it became immediately apparent that the organization faced constant pressure to adjust its beliefs in order to survive. What was also evident though, was that throughout this the staff remained fiercely dedicated to the organization's mission and programs.

After seven months with the organization, it is my determination that while not without its challenges, Pueblito Canada has shown strength and leadership in managing all these pressures, demonstrating that certain NGOs can channel these outside influences and use them as an opportunity for organizational growth without compromising their mission or programs. The first stage of this case study will be an introduction to the organization, its development focus, policies and programs. This background information is key to understanding the next section, international agreements and domestic policies which affect Pueblito's work. Placing this organization in the current international aid arena will demonstrate why its work is supported by the government and the public, as well as the direction these two groups will often pull an organization in if given the chance. An explanation of my practicum activities and their relevance to the challenges of an undereducated public and dependence on government funds will follow. The impact of the above challenges can be felt throughout the organization: the education and fundraising activities I was involved in will demonstrate this. Finally, conclusions will be drawn. As stated above, public perception and support as well as government

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funds affect the ability of small NGOs to maintain their mission and work independently unless they find ways of channeling these pressures in a productive manner. The lessons learned at Pueblito may be applicable to other NGOs. Thus, the case study serves to bring the issues to light in a tangible manner.

Chapter Three

The Case Study: Pueblito Canada

3.1 Introduction to Pueblito's Policy and Programs

Pueblito Canada is a non-governmental organization promoting and

fostering the well-being of children in Latin America and Canada.

Poverty robs children of their right to survive and thrive. Creating a

foundation for life through early childhood development, Pueblito's

mission is to work with families and communities to support the growth of

healthy and happy children in Latin America.

Pueblito Canada's Mission Statement

Pueblito believes in building from the grassroots up, providing both financial support

and capacity-building resources. Facilitating cooperation and dialogue between

organizations in the south and/or north, they believe in a multi-faceted approach to the

projects, and incorporate the themes of basic education, primary health care, child

protection and citizenship into the projects they support. The focus remains on

partnership, which according to Pueblito entails:

a) funding from Pueblito

b) advocacy activities in and around the community

c) capacity building activities with the partner

d) community/family participation within specific projects (Pueblito, 2001a, p. 3).

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Pueblito does not generally fund projects with specific focus on special needs, building construction, equipment, research, studies, scholarships, study tours, school/group outings, or personal needs, but instead focuses on care and services including education, primary health care, protection of children and promotion of children's rights. (Pueblito, 2001b, p.2, Interalia, 2003, p.17).

3.1.1 Countries and Programs

At the time of my placement (January – August 2002), Pueblito had projects in Mexico, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic and were in the process of negotiating a new project in Nicaragua. In Mexico, Pueblito is working with local organizations in education and training programs which meet the specific needs of the different communities. The main southern partner is ENLACE (working in Chiapas, Puebla, Oaxaca and the outskirts of Mexico City): for the past twenty years, Pueblito has been working with them to help indigenous communities build schools and education programs specific to their needs and preserving their cultural identity. Partnering later with COCOMI (Coordinadora Comunitaria de Miravalle) in Mexico City, they are involved in psycho-social risk prevention, training eighteen teachers and two hundred children on addiction, sexuality, health care, anti-social behaviour, consumerism and negative life choices. In Cuernavaca with an organization called CED (Centro de Encuentros y Dialogos), they are supporting workshops on taking care of oneself, preventing violence and promoting positive parent-child relations. And finally, Pueblito has partnered with a local Mexican NGO, CEJUV and Cirque du Soleil of Canada,

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teaching circus arts workshops to at-risk youth aged 10 to 18[8]. This innovative program teaches youth how to work hard to achieve a goal. By performing their new skills for the community, kids who were once on the streets and disregarded regain a place in the eyes of the community.

In Brazil, Pueblito is involved in a project in Belo Horizonte, the country's third largest city. Twenty five percent of the city's population live in favelas, or poor barrios. At the end of the 1970s, under General Geisel's military dictatorship, harsh economic realities forced many poor women to seek work outside the home. Due to a lack of accessible day care, women joined forces and created the community 'creches', or child care centres. These were, however, underfunded and lacked qualified staff. In 1988, Pueblito was approached by MLPC (Movimiento de Luta pro-Creches, or Movement for the Promotion of Child Care Centres) and forged a partnership. The partnership began with infrastructure building, but by the 1990s, together with Ryerson University of Toronto, they had begun to train early childhood educators so that they in turn could provide quality care for the young children in the community. Up to March of 2001, Pueblito also still provided funding for infrastructure. This project was to be phased out in 2003, after 15 years of partnership, following the realization that MLPC had the capacity to continue this work on its own.

In the Dominican Republic, Pueblito is working in a barrio north of Santo Domingo in community development. After 25 years of work on separate projects in the area, Pueblito partnered with a Dominican NGO called CEDECO which is providing nutritional and medical support, childcare and early childhood education, and training

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[8] This project is outside the scope of Pueblito's new ECCD focus; however, due to its popularity and success, the organization continues to support it.

programs for community workers. By helping attain birth certificates for children in the community, CEDECO, with the assistance of Pueblito is helping families gain the right to basic public services.

Pueblito's project in Nicaragua, which began following my practicum, was to be an innovative partnership with an organization called FUNARTE, Foundation to Support Children's Art, designed to teach children about social justice issues and human rights through paintings and murals (Pueblito, 2001c; Interalia, 2000, section 3).

3.1.2 *Development Focus: Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD)*

This work is guided by current research on the benefits of early childhood care and development to children, families, communities, and society as a whole. Intervention in the early years has important effects on a child's character for the rest of his/her life. But the effects don't end with the individual child. Investment in early childhood has a rippling effect – children, families, communities, and nations all benefit when children are given the proper tools to grow and develop (World Bank, 2000, p. 7; United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2001, p. 12; Inter-American Development Bank [IDB], 1998, p.7). Early Childhood Care and Development is defined as:

> a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from
>
> birth to eight years of age, their parents and caregivers. Its purpose is to
>
> protect the child's rights to develop his or her full cognitive, emotional,
>
> social and physical potential. (UNICEF, 2001, p.17)

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ECCD programs are built upon the rights of children to survival, growth and development. They entail community-based services including health, nutrition, education, water and environmental sanitation programs that meet the needs of infants and young children.

The benefits of ECCD can be viewed from both social and economic perspectives. When an ECCD program is implemented with the help of family and community, parents become more active in their children's health, education and the general well-being. This type of programming is inherently participatory, with parents becoming more actively involved in their communities. ECCD programs also improve gender relations, as the men of the community recognize the important role they can play in the upbringing of their children and women gain knowledge and confidence about their important role in the future of the community (UNICEF, 2001, p.12).

Studies have shown that the number of repeated grades and school dropouts declines in areas where ECCD programs are present. This is supported by statistics that show a seven-fold return on investment in ECCD programs. For every dollar not spent on ECCD programs, seven dollars is later required to initiate programs for employment, crime, and other social support programs. Thus, ECCD programs help narrow the gap between the widening gulf of rich and poor countries. Comprehensive ECCD programs with nutrition, health and educational components provide a fair start for children of poor families in communities where basic social services are often unavailable. Furthermore, communities with ECCD programs free up time usually reserved for childcare, so that mothers may find decent work to support their families (World Bank, 2000, p.8; IDB, 1998, p.7).

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This research on ECCD and its benefits for poor communities is currently supported by policies at the international and national (for our purposes, federal) level. Here are the agreements and goals most relevant to this study.

The United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified by Canada in 1991, states (in general terms), that children have the right to

> ➤ basic health and welfare

> ➤ security

> ➤ education, leisure and cultural activities

> ➤ freedom of expression (UNICEF, 1991).

The World Declaration on Education For All, adopted at the 1990 United Nations conference in Jomtien, Thailand, and signed by Canada in the same year states:

> ➤ every person – child, youth and adult – shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs

> ➤ the basic education of children, youth and adults should consider that

>> 1) learning begins at birth

>> 2) primary schooling is the main delivery system

>> 3) youth and adults are diverse and require a variety of delivery systems

>> 4) all available vehicles of learning and social action can be used (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1990).

In 1996, The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) of which Canada is a member,

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outlined ambitious targets in the document, *Shaping the 21ˢᵗ Century: The Contribution of Development Assistance*, including:

> universal primary education in all countries by 2015

> demonstrated programs towards gender equality and the empowerment of women by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005

> a reduction by two-thirds in the mortality rates for infants and children younger than five years old, and a reduction by three-quarters in maternal mortality, all by 2015

> access through the primary health care system of reproductive health services for all individuals of appropriate ages as soon as possible and no later than 2015 (OECD, 1996, p. 8).

The World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in 2000 was a follow-up to the United Nations Education For All of 1990. Donor countries renewed their collective commitment to achieve the goals and targets from ten years prior, including:

> access to primary education for all children, with specific efforts to ensure that girls, children in difficult circumstances, and children of ethnic minorities are targeted (UNESCO, 2000).

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG), set out in the Millennium and signed by all United Nations member states at the Millennium Summit of 2000, demonstrate political and financial support for eight ambitious global objectives, including:

> eradicating extreme poverty and hunger

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> achieving universal primary education for boys and girls

> promoting gender equality and empowering women

> reducing child mortality by two-thirds (United Nations, 2000).

Clearly, with the focus on poverty, primary education, children's health and gender issues, Pueblito's work is well supported at the international level. Canada has agreed to each of the above targets. The next section will outline how these fit into federal policy through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

3.1.3 *Canadian Policy*

The Canadian government's policies fit within the framework outlined by the above international goals. It views widespread poverty as the foremost concern in much of the world. Therefore, 25% of Official Development Assistance (ODA) is being committed through CIDA to meet basic human needs. These include primary health care, basic education, family planning, nutrition, water and sanitation, and shelter. Within CIDA's mandated priority of basic human needs[9], the agency is currently focusing policy and programming on four priority areas: health and nutrition, basic education, HIV/AIDS, and child protection—with gender equality as an integral part of all these priority areas. CIDA maintains that development of a society is impossible without healthy, well-nourished, educated people and resources will be better used if focused on areas where they are most needed and can bring more change. Funding to each of the above areas will increase: spending on health and nutrition will double from $152

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[9] The others being gender equality; infrastructure services; human rights, democracy, and good governance; private sector development; and the environment (CIDA, 2000, p.8).

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million dollars to $305 million per year, and basic education will see its share quadrupled from $41 million to $164 million per year by year five of the plan. Child protection will also receive an increase of four times the spending, from $9 million to $36 million per year. Furthermore, CIDA is adopting a programming approach instead of operating on a project by project basis, with the intention of having more complementary results. Part of this approach is an increased focus on coordination and local ownership (CIDA, 2000, p.8).

One manner in which NGOs receive money from CIDA is through the Canadian Partnership Branch, created to support small and medium sized domestic NGOs. CIDA's relationship with NGOs began in the 1960s as a simple matching formula to support NGO work, but has evolved into a complex process of grants and evaluations where CIDA determines areas of work, how money is spent and how organizations should organize. In 1992, CIDA developed institutional assessment criteria for funding which included: management and governance, national identity, fundraising, constituency development, development education, NGO policy roles, relevance to CIDA's objectives and programme impact (Smillie & Helmich, 1999, p. 75).

Until the 1990s, development education in Canada was one of the largest programs of all OECD countries. It was supported primarily through a matching funds arrangement entitled the Public Participation Program. Public scrutiny and calls for better efficiency and more money going directly to the field led to the demise of development education funds. In addition to development education, CIDA cut funding to provincial councils and learner centres in 1995 in order to emphasize that funds were earmarked for overseas development work. This of course was especially detrimental to

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organizations whose primary work was educating the Canadian public, but all organizations involved in development education as part of their fundraising and public relations campaigns suffered to some extent. It left a wake of lost positions and even forced some organizations to close. The results were piecemeal work by already overwhelmed staff trying to fit articles, lectures, and school visits into their busy schedules, or it was left to transient interns and volunteers. It seems that education for itself, while valued, simply did not show its merits in dollars. The Canadian public lost valuable education programs for youths and adults alike, and NGOs in return lost funding as the public lost interest. New ways to incorporate learning as a component of development work were sought by organizations (Smillie, & Helmich, 1999, p.79; Legault, 1999, sections 3&4).

As a result of the growing awareness of western society that the globe is becoming increasingly interconnected, development education is back in vogue with the Canadian government, but this time with a new title: Public Engagement. Attempting to learn from the failures of general development education, this new approach will strategically reach out to a public seemingly unaffected by unconnected global events by focusing on one specific issue at a time. The name emphasizes that education no longer warrants the effort in and of itself, it must lead to action, or engagement; the official definition being "the continuum along which individuals move from basic awareness of international cooperation through understanding to personal involvement and informed action" (CIDA, 2001a, p.4). This can be accomplished either through mechanisms of the Canadian Partnership Branch (for example, up to 10 percent of the total Canadian contribution for overseas activities may be added to the budget for an NGO's public

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engagement activities in Canada), or through the Stand Alone Public Engagement Fund (SAPEF) which provides funds allowing domestic NGOs to design public engagement activities. CIDA's support for these ranges from $10,000 to a maximum of $50,000 on a 2:1 matching basis (CIDA, 2001e, section 3).

3.1.4 *Transition Years for Pueblito*

The above trends in philosophy, international agreements and domestic policy have impacted the organization. Pueblito is currently undergoing a major transition in policy following a decision by the Board of Directors to narrow its focus from all children in Latin America to specifically children under eight, to be more in accordance with the ECCD philosophy and agreements mentioned above. This has had a ripple effect as Pueblito is expanding the number of ECCD projects the organization is involved in as well as phasing out projects which they feel they have fulfilled their mandate.

Furthermore, Pueblito is seeking a more pro-active role in Canada with stronger links to the Canadian Early Childhood Care community by serving an advocacy and public education role on children's issues both domestically and abroad. This is to bring awareness of the plight of Latin American children to Canadians and encourage them to act, with the intention of becoming a leading organization in the exchange of information and knowledge around ECCD and other children's issues in Canada and Latin America. Their website provides information on both issues and projects and is intended to be a resource and to create interest in the organization. It is an important tool in broadening their scope and appeal (Pueblito, 2002, p.2).

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But the last few years at Pueblito have been difficult. A ten percent decline in donations, and tougher competition for funding have forced the organization to rethink its finances, programs, and human resources. This is compounded by a continuing lack of mainstream recognition of the importance of ECCD by a Canadian public apathetic to other issues, especially following September 11. Funding increasingly comes from CIDA – sixty-one per cent of the organization's revenue in 2001 (Interalia, 2003, p. 22).

Clearly, Pueblito is not immune to the trends in international aid facing small NGOs. The development education project and the community development initiatives (donations and fundraising) in which I was involved further demonstrate this. With cuts to the education budget as a result of changing policy at CIDA during the 1990s, development education has taken a back seat at Pueblito. Once a full-time staff position, the position is now gone, and subsequently there has been no formal education plan. Development education is now incorporated into the job descriptions of the director, the program manager and the outreach coordinator, or is left to short-term interns and volunteers. During the past few years, education initiatives included school presentations, newsletter updates, information booths at events and a photo exhibit. The problem came with evaluating the success of initiatives undertaken without a strategic plan. The new focus on ECCD will hopefully help to keep the organization's development education activities streamlined (Interalia, 2003, p. 69).

Furthermore, as mentioned above, donations have dropped dramatically in the last few years. High staff turnover saw three different people holding the title of fundraiser during the period of 2000 to 2002. Consequently, fundraising slowed: no special events were held in 2001, and few mailings were sent out. As of 2001, Pueblito noted a 30

percent drop in fundraising income of which both the human resources concerns and general decline in donations play important parts (Interalia, p. 27). Without a large marketing budget to create awareness and with donations declining, Pueblito must devise innovative, cost efficient fundraising initiatives to both hold on to existing donors and find ways to expand their base. I will use these two areas as points of departure to discuss how Pueblito's work is influenced by two challenges outlined in the previous sections: a general public undereducated and often misled in development issues, and increased dependence on government funds.

3.2 Practicum Activities: NGO Issues in Local Level Activities

My duties as an intern at Pueblito began in January 2002 and were completed in April. I returned to the organization after a brief hiatus, in late May, on contract in a different capacity, and continued until mid-August 2002. My personal learning objectives at this time, as stated in the methodology, included gaining practical experience with an NGO working in a Latin American context on children's issues. Both the education and fundraising activities in which I was involved provided ample opportunity for this. Understanding how the practical blended with the theoretical knowledge I had gained on NGO issues was a second personal goal. Many of my experiences demonstrated the challenges discussed and analyzed by NGO academics, specifically the problems associated with funding and education. The categories of public education and independence from government stood out as problems faced by all

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NGOs, and from this the overall goal of examining how organizations manage these crushing pressures while staying true to founding beliefs was born.

This section will outline the activities in which I was involved, as well as explain how these fit into the broader picture of Pueblito's work and its ability to navigate these constant influences. The conclusion will therefore build from this and place my work and the organization's work into the broader context of Canadian NGO and International NGO issues of public perception and government funding – the two issues I have found most relevant to my work at the organization.

3.2.1 *Education Program*

The first section of my time at Pueblito was spent working on development education (or public engagement, as currently termed) in order to expand the website to include a children's corner – a place on the website to educate kids about life for children in poor communities in Latin America where Pueblito and its partners work. It was to be created for the level of elementary school children, but would be accessible to parents and teachers as well. It would be a site where kids could not only learn and explore through games and activities, but would provide opportunities for them to speak out, participate and act. The first two weeks of my practicum were spent getting to know the organization, staff, board, projects and resources. Sifting through the resource library, reading through the existing website, talking with staff and board members gave me a feel for what the organization was looking for. I also learned a bit more about the design that staff and board had in mind (although little was official): a highly interactive site for

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kids age 7 to 12. I was also given a document a previous intern had worked on outlining a website plan that explained the cognitive effects of presenting types of web pages in a certain order. These were the inputs critical to the beginnings of my design.

Research at the public and university libraries, bookstores and internet drew me to the conclusion that very little had been done in the way of creating resources on international development issues for children. While much can be found to educate adults on social justice, information for children on other countries tended to be limited to the kinds of issues most of us are familiar with from our grade six social studies classes: mining in Chile, dance and traditional dress in Peru, food for export in the Caribbean. Yet nothing spoke of the effects of these on the ordinary citizen. Very few resources mentioned the effects of trade, the lack of medical care, or the gender differences in education. Websites like Oxfam, Unicef, Save the Children had a few resources and games, but teachers and school libraries had little in the way of books. In any case, Pueblito may have discovered for itself a real niche – a void to be filled in the education of young Canadians on development issues.

The design I decided upon was a children's village – an interactive site for Canadian school-age kids where they can learn about development issues in Latin America, specifically the countries in which Pueblito has projects. The site is to be colourful, interesting , and play-based, in keeping with a child's attention span. It will have links to different topics and short articles educating the children in a manner that is in line with Pueblito's mission to not exploit poverty, or to portray its beneficiaries in a manner which would degrade them or misinform others of their true situation. The main theme of the site is to be 'A Village in Latin America', with sub-themes of 1) home and

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family life, including people, languages, housing, and resources, 2) school and play, including literacy, music and games played, 3) the market, covering local food, as well as jobs for adults and children, and 4) health issues, covering illness and disease, traditional medicine, and hygiene. Each sub-theme will have an information center with content sheets exploring different issues where students could come for homework or projects as well as games and activities.

My supervisor and I went through an intensive process of setting parameters around the project before a board meeting to present the ideas. She was right – the board members questioned every aspect of the design and may have changed it altogether had the parameters not been set firm and approved by the director first. It is here that I learned quickly the tendencies of small NGO boards to micromanage, to get involved at all levels, instead of allowing staff to take the responsibility.

Once the design was completed in early February, the remainder of that month into March and part of April were spent on research and writing, with other intermittent development education and administrative activities in between. In March, I had the opportunity to represent Pueblito at an Ontario Council for International Cooperation (OCIC) conference. OCIC is the provincial council of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, the umbrella council of approximately 100 Canadian NGOs. This 'Global Citizens Forum' was a yearly event held for the community and teachers. The theme this year being Global Education Strategies in the Community and the Classroom, funded in part by the Ontario Trillium Foundation and CIDA. Having seen a flyer for the conference in February, I submitted a proposal to be a presenter for a workshop entitled *Utilizing New Media and/or Digital Video for Global Education*. This

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turned out to be an excellent opportunity to market the upcoming children's website to teachers and school boards, network with other NGOs involved in development education, and learn a little more about the OCIC and the organizations which are part of it.

Along with two other presenters, one graduate student from Guelph Rural Extension Studies who spoke on the history and theoretical components of technology-based learning, and the web designer from Medecins Sans Frontiers who spoke on his experience with web design, I provided participants with new web technology useful in promoting public engagement. My overview which focused on the beginning stages of the Children's Corner was well received by the small group (approximately 10 people) with comments and discussion centering again on the lack of resources for kids, but also on the shortage of funding for new technology. Some representatives from other NGOs expressed interest in having our site as a link. This once again confirmed that Pueblito had found a niche and a potential area to make a profound difference in development education in Canada, but also highlighted the financial challenges non-profits face in moving ideas forward. I later attended a workshop on Best Practices in NGO/Teacher Collaboration. Although much of the post-presentation discussion focused on exchange programs, there was talk of how best to access to teachers. Most of the NGO representatives and teachers agreed that going through the principals and the school board worked best. Poster contests, film festivals and radio shows have worked well to gain student interest. Also, NGOs must maintain a presence in the schools in order to be effective. Classroom presentations and in-school involvement, although time consuming for NGO staff, are the best ways to gain interest and loyalty from students.

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A few other opportunities presented themselves during this time. A teacher from the Halton Public School Board contacted Pueblito looking for partnership for a CIDA grant. We had looked at the Global Education Initiatives grant ourselves back in January but then realized that as an NGO we were ineligible. This teacher from Halton was creating a children's book entitled *World Perspectives*, and wanted to partner with an NGO in order to strengthen her proposal. During our meeting, she lamented also the lack of resources for this topic, and was keen to include our website as a resource in her credits. However, the timing wouldn't meet the first edition deadline. She also had useful suggestions about accessing school boards and promoting the website to teachers.

One such idea was a conference for Ontario History, Geography and Social Studies teachers held at York University. I attended, and hosted a booth advertising Pueblito and our website (and upcoming Children's Corner). At this event I met several lead elementary school social studies teachers, as well as book publishers specializing in resources for schools. Once again, while atlases and agriculture books abounded, very few resources were found dealing with poverty issues. NGOs like World Vision were present also, and had their magazines and activities for teachers, but their resources tended to focus more on a higher age group. I had created, but received very little response to a survey I had designed for teachers to give us their input on the website. This survey included input on what they wanted to see and if they were willing to volunteer or allow us to run a test pilot with their students. Disappointing, but yet another glimpse into the challenges of asking busy people for their time, and trying to accomplish a big project on a tiny budget.

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A third opportunity came in meeting with children's book publishers. This opportunity presented itself during research I had been doing on the internet on publishers who might have resources we could use, or might be interested in partnering with us in some other manner, ie. sponsorship. While most of the publishers had little to offer us, or little interest, one editor suggested I try Groundwood Books in Toronto. This publisher had not surfaced in my internet search, but their website looked promising, with a Latin American section called *Libros Tegrillos*. A phone call with their marketing manager and subsequent meeting provided us with many Latin American based stories (although none on development issues) and a future date to meet a children's author from Argentina, Jorge Luján, here to promote his upcoming children's books. Our meeting with the Argentinian was interesting and informative, but despite the great ideas discussed, little else came to fruition. It has occurred to me that much of life in a small NGO is like that. Great ideas are hatched, but hectic work schedules and shifting priorities impede the progress. There is so much good work to be done with all of these networks created – but who has the time? These meetings and networks, although always informative and an excellent way to keep one's name and organization in the public, tend to become more of a drain on time rather than an effective way of successfully managing precious staff time.

The biggest obstacle I came across working on the website was the change in direction with each new person's input. For example, a week's worth of research and contacts on local web design companies, including a subsection on those specializing in non-profits, resulted in two comments from various staff and board members which sent me back to the drawing board: 1) Perhaps we should look at companies which are really

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cutting edge. We don't want to sell ourselves short. Thus, the non-profit, much more affordable estimates were left to the wayside. 2) We shouldn't be looking at paying for this. The budget is extremely tight. We should get a volunteer to do it. A week's work spent researching, making contacts at the local community colleges, and preparing a flyer to attract students was then sidelined as the idea of pro-bono work from a web design company would be more reliable than a student. The company would have more resources, and they would be able to use it on their promotional materials. I never did find a company who wanted to take on the project for free; all however, were willing to give us a discounted rate. We then needed to find more funding. This issue remained unresolved until the day I left.

Similar issues arose with the writing of the content itself. An advisory team was needed, and much time was spent determining who and what kinds of skills were needed to make the site credible. We needed to set the site into the curriculum, so I contacted the school boards to see how to best fit this blossoming idea into the curriculum and how to promote it to teachers. Other afternoons were spent discussing ways to use the site. The site itself wasn't going to make money so it was suggested that perhaps we should look at a CDROM version instead or as well. We could sell it for profit, or perhaps look into a partnership with a retail company (cereal boxes were one idea) to promote it. Having the whole Children's Corner in French, English and Spanish immediately was another concern by some staff members (even though Pueblito's original website is only in English at present).

More important was the question of how to represent our beneficiaries without seeming stereotypical. Could we have one general "Latin American village", or would

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that be misrepresenting the uniqueness of each country? One side agreed that there were elements of poverty that transcend countries and cultures. A poor countryside village faced the same issues whether it was located in Brazil or the Dominican Republic. The other side, however, adamantly pronounced that it was inappropriate to generalize. Also, the question of including work from our beneficiaries was troublesome. When first discussed, it was decided that it would be too problematic to devote much time to arrange for artwork or personal stories from our partners in the South. Later, however, it was decided that this was necessary to maintain the credibility of the organization. A letter was sent to our partners in the south but received no replies. This perhaps will need to become its own project, with funding, timelines and evaluation built in.

There were many, many shifting ideas and changing opinions on the basic parameters of the project. Laying and keeping the groundwork amidst so many 'hands in the pot' was cumbersome. This struggle to get an idea moving forward is a continuing challenge for small NGOs, particularly those whose staff and board are very close to the issues. Everyone's voice counts, and everyone has a strong opinion about where the project should be headed.

Exacerbating these issues was the massive staff changeover of the previous year that continued until the spring. Only the receptionist who had been a constant for the last fifteen years, the community outreach coordinator with six years at the organization and the Executive Director with four years were mainstays. Three new staff members came on board between the summer and fall of 2001: the project manager, finance coordinator, and fundraising coordinator, rounding out the small staff of six. While they brought a

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wealth of knowledge and skills, each new employee was presented with a significant learning curve.

However, by the third month, three staff members resigned for reasons ranging from professional opportunities to job dissatisfaction. A new management design structure was developed in February as the Executive Director felt that he was spending far too much time micro-managing the office and its relations with the board. A new position was needed – one that would incorporate the community outreach and fundraising positions. This position circumvented the existing community outreach position, which was now a management position as well, managing finance and fundraising. My supervisor was asked to compete for this new position. When the Board hired someone else, she decided that her time at Pueblito was finished. This highlights how competitive employment at a non-profit can be. Like most NGOs, in response to strict competition for dollars, and because of increased demands of accountability, Pueblito has had to tighten its bootstraps, refocus and professionalize.

Two additional staff left for family reasons and professional opportunities. This once again left Pueblito in a tumultuous state with their human resources. It also signaled a change in my role in the organization. Beginning in mid-April, I began training to learn the database and how donations were received and acknowledged. I took over this role in late April, getting ready for a full-time contract beginning in May, in time for the spring 'rush', a result of incoming donations from the spring mail-out. The remainder of my time at Pueblito was spent in this capacity – responsible for donations, donor communications and assisting with fundraising initiatives. Website work was put on the back burner, until more funding could be located, or until new volunteers could be found.

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3.2.2 *Fundraising Activities*

Pueblito donors are an eclectic bunch and they care deeply about the issues. They want to know about the projects and the children, and write to the organization when changes have been made to the projects they are familiar with (sometimes positive, sometimes negative). From large contributions from individuals or groups of over a thousand dollars or more, to seniors sending a dollar or two at a time, each is respected and thanked for their contributions to the work. I found it to be very much a part of the organizational culture at Pueblito to treat each donor with great respect, although the staff time, paper and stamp spent on tax receipts and thank you letters for on or two dollar donations far outweighed the donation itself, let alone the cost of producing and mailing out the quarterly newsletters. This is to balance out in the long run, with the value of more Canadians knowing about the organization and spreading the word, and of more people involved in education on development issues.

A more serious issue for the organization which is systemic of a more general trend is the increasing age of the average donor. Pueblito is realizing that its "aging donor base represented a decreasing funding base" (Interalia, 2003, p. 27). During my brief stint in the donations office, a handful of notices were sent to Pueblito informing us that donors had passed away. While occasionally donors bequeath a sum of money to their favourite charity, this has not generally been the case with Pueblito. Another trend was that donors were tightening their financial belts or consolidating their donations. A few (not necessarily older) wrote notes stating that they needed to cut down on the number of charities they were giving to either for financial reasons, or just to keep things

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simpler. They therefore would no longer be contributing to Pueblito, although they supported the work. All of this resulted in Pueblito losing a proportion of its current donor base. The challenge in fundraising is being able to hold on to existing donors, while reaching out to younger donors.

Administration problems of a small office working on a small budget were regular occurrences for the donations department. The database was slow and often crashed, thankfully not losing valuable information. It was not user friendly and there was no guidebook for the codes. The printer for the tax receipts had a tendency to jam. Newer equipment would have solved the problem, but this was not a budget priority.

Another area I assisted with was the fundraiser with Cirque du Soleil in August of 2002. Each year, Cirque du Soleil gives a number of tickets to organizations it is affiliated with which in turn can then be sold and reap the proceeds for a small profit. The event is always a success. Board members purchase tickets for themselves or invite friends. One board member's law firm purchases the lion's share of the tickets for his firm, which in turn uses the evening as an opportunity to entertain clients. My duties for this event were again to manage payments and tax receipts, while the new director of community outreach maintained communication with Cirque and with the board member responsible for the majority of the tickets.

One bonus of the event was a free ticket for each staff member. It was a good chance for staff to mingle with board members and whomever they had chosen to invite. It was also a chance for the director to be present and meet prospective donors. Cirque is very strict with its marketing, and any advertising we did to promote the event to our constituents had to be approved and had to keep our logos very distinct. There was no

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advertising or handing out of flyers at the event. We were, however, allowed to have a booth with literature on our organization and work during intermission and after the show. We found that most people did not wander out to our area (where Cirque had placed us) during intermission, and after the show most walked right past us in a hurry to beat the crowds out of the parking lot. After running several of these booths, it has become apparent that it takes a good 'hook' to lure people in. It is much easier for the public to size up the name of the organization from a distance, or to grab some literature while avoiding eye contact.

The last activity I was involved in (albeit briefly), was the fundraising event for the fall. As noted above, Pueblito is struggling with competition for donors and dollars. Due to staff turnover the previous year, its fundraising event for 2001 did not materialize. Thus for the current year, budgets were tight and bringing in income was at a crucial point for the organization. At the point of my departure, the committee had set a financial goal of raising $15,000. Other goals included spreading the word about Pueblito's work to new donors and to hopefully attract a younger donor base as well. A fiesta night was decided upon – an entertaining evening with games, food, latin music, all in support of the organization. The difficulty came in balancing the entertainment with maintaining a business focus and keeping profits at the core of the event. As the committee became more and more excited, the ideas flowed about making this a regular event with entertainment for all while meeting fundraising goals.[10]

Donor cutbacks and apathy, fundraising hiccups, struggles between board and staff, stringent government funding requirements, education programs on a practically non-existent budget, staff turnover – these represented the daily challenges faced by the

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[10] This has become an annual fundraising event for the organization.

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organization while struggling to keep its focus on mission, programs, and most importantly, the needs of its beneficiaries. My work formed a part of the overall challenges the organization faces with the effects of an uneducated Canadian public, and an increasing reliance on government funds. The fact that these pressures could be seen even at the internship level is indicative of how they infiltrate all planes of the organization.

It was at this point that my contract with the organization ended, and I began a new position with a different NGO outside of the city. The activities described above will be discussed further, along with broader issues of Canadian policy and international NGO trends in the conclusions.

Chapter Four

Discussion

The public engagement activities and community development initiatives in which I was involved at Pueblito clearly demonstrate that the organization is not immune to the trends in international aid facing NGO work. This section will build on the information above, using the examples to examine how the organization handles the pressure of an undereducated public and the challenges that come with government funds. What, if any, effect have these pressures had on the structure or stage of the organization? Has Pueblito been able to channel these pressures without compromising its mission or programs?

To begin with, Pueblito has shown strong leadership in not succumbing to images of poverty and despair, or stereotyping diverse communities in order to bring in funds. The Children's Village website debate about how best to represent a 'typical' Latin American village was frustrating, but showed resolve of staff and board members not to assume or generalize. The organization's fundraising philosophy is that all images used, whether for education or fundraising purposes, must show hope and strength, not pity (Pueblito Canada, 2001c). Pueblito has taken great efforts to not fall into the easy alternative of images of despair in order to catch the public eye. This is noticeable on the website, in all newsletters, and during campaigns. In fact, it works hard to ensure that its donors understand more than the relief and welfare model of development. Newsletters keep the donors aware and up to date on development issues, as well as progress made in

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each project. Because of the long history Pueblito has in each country, donors understand the efforts needed to make change a reality, and the obstacles to doing so.

With so much attention on larger organizations, whose marketing budgets allow for glitzier campaigns and who are prone to using images designed to create pity, attracting new donors for Pueblito is a continual challenge. My activities as an intern demonstrate many small-scale networking opportunities from schools to teacher conferences to information booths. Other staff have also participated in outreach projects and community events. While educational, none of these have the impact of a slick ad campaign in newspapers or on television. As well, as stated above, addressing its aging donor base is also a concern, attracting new and younger donors is paramount.

The website is one example of Pueblito's search for a niche to educate the public on issues. Once finished, the website will establish Pueblito as a leader in educating youth on the situation of children in the organization's target countries. While youth may not be where the money is, by connecting with them, Pueblito hopes to spread the word throughout the community consequently reaching new donors.

At the same time that Pueblito has been struggling to attract donors, its dependence on government funds has increased substantially. It first received funding from CIDA in 1987 for specific projects which quickly grew to broader program funding in 1993. CIDA's total contribution to Pueblito's programs was 6.5 million dollars at the end of 2001. In 1999, CIDA was responsible for 42% of the organization's income; by 2001 that had risen to 61%, the highest level in the organization's history. Conversely, its donor donations had dropped by 39% in the same period (Interalia, 2003, p. 26). This

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example follows the patterns predicted by Fowler and Smillie in the literature section of this paper, and likewise shows no signs of reversing in the immediate future.

This has had a number of negative effects on the organization. Looking first to the public engagement projects I was involved with, it is easily apparent that the current development education efforts have been short and piecemeal in approach as a result of changes in government policy. During my placement, the responsibilities for public engagement were spread among the staff, excepting the financial coordinator and the fundraiser. More often than not, the task was left to interns, as staff members became overloaded with other work.

This was not always the case. From 1994 to 1997, Pueblito had funding from Health Canada for a Children's Rights Project (Interalia, 2003, p. 69) and also had a staff position devoted to education and outreach until the mid 1990s. When the government funding for such activities dried up, so did the work. Strict dependence on government funds has clearly had a negative impact on the organization, and while it has made clear attempts at keeping this important work going, it remained a disjointed approach throughout my practicum.

Apart from these challenges, government funding has helped secure the financial stability of the organization. The timeliness of the increase in funding has meant that Pueblito can continue to help its partners, despite a drastic decline in private donations. This is always beneficial when setting long-term objectives. Fowler's high-low dichotomy certainly applies to the organization. With 61% of their revenues coming from CIDA, they are highly vulnerable to shifts in domestic policy and have low autonomy when it comes to shifting government priorities.

While time consuming, staff and board members at Pueblito used their direct contact with CIDA and the summative evaluation as an opportunity for organizational growth. Drawing on the strengths of their government contacts, programs were analyzed and fine tuned. Discussion for the most part was beneficial, and the overall relationship with CIDA is positive. Some staff viewed the evaluation as opportunity for dialogue with government and to hopefully gain additional funds for the work by making it clear how relevant Pueblito's long term goals in Latin America are. Pueblito also has found reinforcement, rather than obstacles, directly within CIDA itself as its focus on basic needs is in line with the mission of all Pueblito's projects. Furthermore, the specific emphasis on children's needs places the organization in a unique position in the NGO world, as it currently has the timely backing of many international agreements. It can use current research on ECCD, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Education for All, the OECD targets and the Millennium Development Goals, all supported by CIDA, to defend its work.

In order to maintain an independent voice, Pueblito keeps networking ties with other organizations through coalitions. The OCIC conference I participated in is an example of this. It is also a member of CG (the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development). Within the research and lobbying done through these two coalitions, Pueblito finds broader support for many of their initiatives and reinforces its relationships with much of the like-minded NGO community.

It is clear that despite the trend towards welfare and relief projects that do not require such a long term commitment, Pueblito has evolved from its original roots in Costa Rica to an organization that understands the complexities and time needed for true

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development work to take place. Its advocacy efforts here and with its southern partner countries, as well as its efforts to help partner organizations become self-sustaining, demonstrates their commitment. To date the organization has had no trouble making the Canadian government aware of this and is working with CIDA to continue helping self reliant, local development level programs. The images it presents of its beneficiaries to the northern public are further evidence of this. At Pueblito, Smillie's community-based voluntarism is mixed with a degree of institutionalization and professionalism. Volunteers are welcome, but staff is highly trained and competition for positions remains intense. The work is demanding, and in keeping overhead costs low, the small staff of five carries a workload of many more. The structure of the organization as defined in the literature review remains virtually unchanged despite pressures of public perception and a reliance on government funding. Maintaining a level of autonomy and avoiding misleading image traps is always a challenge, but Pueblito for the most part has kept its focus and integrity, channeling these outside influences in ways beneficial to itself and, more importantly, its southern partners.

Its success has, however, been partially dependent on other factors. Its focus, children, is one that is difficult to challenge and always resonates with the public. Not all NGOs have this kind of unquestioned backing for its cause. Recent research and international agreements, as well as the Canadian government's focus on issues of basic needs have helped. Its long history has helped. It is a well respected organization with (at the time of my placement) over 25 years of development experience. By remaining small, and keeping its countries limited, its work reflects the dedication needed for true development work to take hold. Its honesty and integrity in presenting a fair and hopeful

image of its partners maintains a level of dignity, while not falling into misleading ad campaigns in order to acquire private donations. Pueblito has a dedicated staff and board. With a solid understanding of development issues, Pueblito's board members and staff show loyalty to the issues and the people they help; like true development work, they are involved for the long term. Its research and innovative programs are second to none. Paintings and murals to educate children on their rights, preserving cultural identity, teaching circus arts to street kids: all of these projects demonstrate an ability to not be tied to traditional thinking or methods. Projects are culturally appropriate and produce results. Pueblito has found strength in numbers. By being part of coalitions, it maintains an active presence in the non-profit and ECCD community. This in turn affords a level of credibility it could not have achieved in isolation. It forges strong partnerships. Following along the lines of keeping a fair image, Pueblito respects and seeks out strong local organizations with which to partner as they are well aware that these organizations offer direct knowledge of each specific situation.

It is clear that Pueblito is well-placed in the international aid arena and is fortunate to receive support from the factors mentioned above. It struggles, like all small NGOs, with the effects of an undereducated public and a reliance on government funds, but it has not compromised mission or programs. Rather, it has used these challenges as opportunity for organizational growth and to establish for itself a niche in the NGO world, finding support to continue its important work. The world of international assistance has never been static. Political situations change and public beliefs alter, local and international needs refocus, research brings new ideas and concerns to the forefront and government priorities shift. Pueblito's success has been due to its ability to accept

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this and channel outside influences in a positive manner. Through a willingness to

analyze, learn, and adjust in the ever-changing international development arena, other

small Canadian NGOs, and ultimately their beneficiaries, may find the same success.

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