



## CoCo Program

# Update

Summer 1994

Companion Community Development Alternatives

## Seeking Alternatives Together

After surviving the horrors and painful losses of war, people in El Salvador are working hard to rebuild their lives and communities. In these pages, you will read about their achievements, and how committed individuals and communities in the United States are supporting them.

CoCo Development Alternatives exists because thousands of Salvadorans have devoted their lives to finding hopeful alternatives for the future. Many of them lost their lives in this search. But they have created the opportunity for ordinary, committed people to direct the course of history. CoCo is a part of that opportunity, providing a new model for how North Americans and Latin Americans can relate and work together to find hopeful alternatives for our shared future. It is up to us to make the most of this opportunity.

We need commitment from more North Americans. We need you to share our mission of supporting community-based development in El Salvador and creating new attitudes of mutual respect in the process.

We need you to invest in CoCo Development Alternatives. Your investment contribution will help us expand our program of Companionship in Development to involve and benefit more people in El Salvador and the United States. It will help us build our Development Fund, which ensures timely financing for projects.

Until now, CoCo has relied upon the all-consuming dedication of a few individuals to run our program, while nearly all fundraising has

Photo by Dennis Dunleavy



focused on support for development projects. Now is the time to invest in the organization to help assure a long future of supporting community self-development in Latin America in a spirit of companionship.

Your contribution will have an impact, and you will be part of a historic opportunity and privilege to work with Salvadoran communities who are pursuing sustainable development strategies for their future. By sharing our resources with them, we are also sharing the vision of a global community founded on just relationships and rooted in the democratic use of resources.

It is a far-off vision. But in seeking hopeful alternatives together, we are headed in that direction. Look inside, and you'll see what I mean!

--Tim Crouse, Program Director

P.S. Your investor contribution to CoCo is tax-deductible.



# Updates from El Salvador:

In pursuing its mission of supporting sustainable development in Latin America, CoCo Development Alternatives uses a methodology which guarantees that the 'voice of the South' is heard as the authority in determining priorities and how projects will be implemented. After centuries of cultural imposition and economic exploitation in Latin America by outside nations, we consider it essential to be invited by communities if we are to work with them in development. Currently, CoCo has entered into working relationships with two regionally oriented, community-based development organizations in El Salvador. We have agreed to work together as *Associates in Development* on diverse projects over several years. Specific projects may also involve other organizations.

Successful projects with our two associates in the regions of Cuscatlàn and Cabañas will eventually lead us to new regions and working relationships with new associates. For now, we are challenged and excited with the visionary development plans and leadership offered by our current associates, the CRC and ADES.

## CRC — Committee for Reconstruction of the Communities of Cuscatlàn

Initially organized in 1988 as part of the Committee of Repopulated Communities of Cuscatlàn and Cabañas (CRCC), the CRC has now applied for legal status as a non-governmental organization in El Salvador. The CRC is directed by an executive committee composed of promoters from the different areas of their work with the repopulated communities in the Guazapa Valley area of Cuscatlàn. The areas of their work include health, education, organization of women, environment, land transfers, agricultural production, social work and general community organizing. The CRC has offices in San Salvador and Suchitoto, the municipal center of Guazapa.

In 1992, following the signing of the peace accords, the CRC formed part of a municipal committee to achieve consensus among the diverse sectors of the population for reconstruction priorities in the region. Much to the credit of the CRC's civic education campaigns, there was a strong turn-out in the March 20 elections and a municipal government supportive of regional consensus was elected in Suchitoto. This could have a positive impact on the development efforts of the CRC in the next few years.

Photo By Nicole Jacobs



Alfonso Rivas, President of the CRC (center), with Rev. Gregg (left) and Kris Davison (right) of the "Friends in the Spirit" Companion Community Group in Marshalltown, Iowa who hosted Alfonso during the Fall 1993 CoCo Tour

### Summary from the CRC of their Achievements in 1993

**HEALTH:** We trained promoters to teach basic hygiene, preventative medicine, oral health and mental health. Clinic visits were available to residents twice a week, and we began a campaign to supply all communities with first aid chests.

**EDUCATION:** We were able to ensure that classes were provided for students in 12 communities, some held in school buildings and others in open-air shelters. In 1994, we anticipate the opening of 6 new schools in the region, and are negotiating with the Ministry of Education (MINED) to provide government-paid teachers for the schools. We are part of the national *Concertación Educativa de El Salvador* (See p.5) in this process.

**ORGANIZATION OF WOMEN:** We continue to make efforts to promote the organization of women, which constitute the majority of the population in the region, and those who bear most of the responsibility for the family.

**ENVIRONMENT:** We have an organization called Eco-Guazapa, which stands for 'Ecology in Guazapa.' We are orienting people to conserve natural resources in ways such as: not burning fields; not cutting trees; caring for wildlife; and soil conservation. We currently have several active ecological projects, including the study of existing species of trees in the Guazapa Volcano and a project to plant fruit trees.

**LAND TRANSFERS:** To help insure compliance of the peace accords, we are working hard to follow-through with the land transfer program for ex-combatants and families in the ex-conflictive areas. In our region, a total of 65 plots of land are available for sale, totalling 4,227 manzanas (7,186 acres), to benefit 440 ex-combatants and 527 community families.

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZING:** We work directly with the communities in the region through their *directivas* (community councils). Some communities have a more solid level of organization than others. We help to orient and support the *directivas* in organizing their agricultural production and developing their material and economic resources. We ordinarily hold general assembly meetings every 6 months, and on special occasions if necessary.

" We want to reshape our thinking into terms of complete development as human beings; to strengthen ourselves organizationally, to be a permanent source of quality progress, always seeking new skills and attitudes which will permit us to grow. "

Philosophy Statement of the CRCC (Predecessor to ADES & the CRC)

## ADES — Association for Social and Economic Development of Santa Marta

The Association for Social and Economic Development of Santa Marta (ADES) is a private non-profit organization, formed in 1988 as part of the Committee of Repopulated Communities of Cabañas and Cuscatlán (CRCC), with the objective of accompanying rural communities that were returning from exile and displacement to their home areas in the provinces of Chalatenango and Cabañas.

The fundamental objective of ADES' work is to promote development that is socially, economically and ecologically sustainable. Among ADES' activities since its origin have been the elaboration of diagnostic studies, fundraising, providing technical assistance and training, and general management and oversight of various projects in support of the beneficiary communities. ADES has technical specialists in agriculture, education, health and administration. ADES also

Photo By Lois Kleffman



Carlos Bonilla, President of ADES

has vehicles, computer equipment, and offices in Cabañas, Chalatenango and San Salvador.

ADES aims to benefit those people and communities that were most severely affected by the war, and others who have been traditionally excluded from the benefits of economic development in the country. Presently, ADES' programs reach 21,000 people organized in 59 communities, of a total population of 165,000 in Cabañas. In the province of Chalatenango, two municipalities benefit from ADES' programs, with a population of approximately 7,000 in 25 communities. ADES hopes that within a 10-year period, this population will effectively and efficiently become re-inserted into the economic life of the country, and that their approach to social and economic development can be a model for other regions that face a similar situation.

Diagnostics completed in 1991 and 1993 in the region reveal high unemployment or under-employment, low income, lack of credit and technical training for agricultural production, illiteracy rates higher than 60%, above average rates of mortality and under-nourishment, lack of infrastructure for social and business purposes, and general degradation of natural resources. All of these realities point to the need for a process of development through an integrated program that will guarantee that all development efforts reinforce each other and are not isolated and unsustainable. Within a 10-year period, ADES anticipates resolving the basic emergency needs of the population through the acquisition and legalization of land, installation of water systems, and support for subsistence agriculture. Another priority during this period is to secure investments for long-term development.

### 1993 ADES Initiatives

- Stimulation of agricultural and livestock production
- Provision of tools and work equipment
- Community health, education and literacy programs
- Training of community health promoters, dental workers, general clinic workers, midwives, and workshops on mental health, nutrition, child care, and the processing of soy products
- Sports and cultural activities
- Business administration workshops
- Community leadership training
- Support for small businesses, including: carpentry, sewing, shoe making, and a tinsmith shop
- Construction of housing, schools and a health center
- Road construction and maintenance
- Special community events

### ADES Projections for 1994

- Improve educational opportunities for kindergarten and elementary levels; basic literacy; and technical training in the areas of agriculture, animal husbandry and artisan skills
- Extend services in the areas of mental health, dental care, environmental health, latrines and potable water
- Women, youth and pastoral programs
- Environmental education, promoting the export of marketable products that are conducive to organic cultivation
- Transportation cooperative
- Alternative resources for electricity (solar, bioquimical, hydroelectric...)
- Expand grain storage facilities
- Create a community credit system
- Install a community radio program
- Install community telephone service
- Construct and improve other communication services



# Seeds of Learning

**"We try to encourage the maximum level of participation from the communities in the work of education, and we seek to keep in close touch with the needs of the population. To do this, we have formed a regional education team composed of representatives of all the communities, and this is the body that makes decisions for the education program."**

This approach to building an education program, described by a member of ADES' Education Committee in Northern Cabañas, is what makes our Seeds of Learning (SOL) campaign so promising. Through SOL, educators, students and other interested people in the United States become directly involved in helping these dynamic community-based education programs in El Salvador succeed.

Statistics from El Salvador's Ministry of Education in 1992 indicate that over 51% of the total population over 10 years old is illiterate, while in the rural areas the illiteracy rate is over 76.8%. They also show that two out of five school-age persons do not have access to basic education. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has designated millions of dollars of aid to the Salvadoran government specifically for education in the formerly conflictive regions of the country. To date, the under-resourced community education committees in these regions have benefited very little from this money.

The *Concertación Educativa de El Salvador (CEES)* formed in 1993 to bring together over 1,000 community teachers from across El Salvador. With only limited support from community-based and non-governmental organizations (NGO's), these 'popular' teachers provided maternal, pre-school, basic and adult education to an estimated 25,000 residents



during the past decade of war. This is in regions where the government has never -- before, during or after the war -- offered consequential education programs.

CoCo has supported education-related projects in Cuscatlàn, Cabañas and Usulutàn since 1992, and we are now supporting CEES through SOL. During this transitory period from war to peace in El Salvador, our support for the alternative education programs continues to be very important to help them become stronger, as they gradually integrate into a new national education system.

Photo By Lois Kleffman

## School Construction Projects

Companion Community groups from Bloomington and Greencastle Indiana have mostly financed and helped build two schools in the region of Cuscatlàn.

In August 1992, the first group from Bloomington visited the community of San Rafael to help begin construction of the school. Three other Bloomington groups have since visited the community, trips organized by the St. Paul Catholic Center and Center for University Ministries offices at Indiana University. During this time, they have raised over \$21,000 for the school, which is slated for completion this summer.

In January 1993, a DePauw University Winter Term in Mission trip helped with the reconstruction of the bombed-out school building in the community of Consolación. This project was completed in October '93, and over 60 students are now attending classes there taught by a community resident. While the DePauw group was working with the community, representatives from the National Secretariat for Reconstruction of the government visited the group, providing community leaders the opportunity to present their priority reconstruction needs. Within eight months, the community was dedicating homes they built with financing from the government and USAID.



Members of CoCo's Salvadoran Construction Team



## Support for Teacher Salaries and Certification

The community teachers supported by SOL are residents of the communities themselves, men and women ranging in age from teens to older adults. Most have not had formal education, but are learning through practice and advancing their own level of education through community workshops. In 1993, U.S. Companion Community groups and CoCo provided grants for 31 teachers' stipends in community schools of Cabañas, Cuscatlàn and Usulutàn.

This year, the SOL campaign aims to raise support grants for 35 teachers in Cabañas and Cuscatlàn. But in addition, a national network of U.S. educators, students and other interested people have been sending letters of support to CEES, encouraging the approval by USAID of a \$5 million proposal for academic grants and certification of at least 1,050 community teachers from all 14 provinces of the country. When approved, the project will be managed cooperatively between CEES and the Ministry of Education.



Community Teacher and Students in El Sitio, Cuscatlàn

## La Mariposa -- The Butterfly Cultural Center Construction Project

*La Mariposa - The Butterfly* - aims to support sustainable development in the community of La Hacienda El Sitio and the surrounding 22 communities of Cuscatlàn as a multi-purpose, multi-level cultural center. The construction of the Mariposa was initiated during the 1994 January Winter Term in Mission Trip of DePauw University, completing the first phase, which is an outdoor platform for artistic performances. CoCo intends to continue generating support for this project.

The objectives of the Mariposa are to heal the minds and spirits of Salvadorans living in post-war trauma; to be a place for people to be together in mutual respect to learn and to find peace in an area that was hard-hit by the war; to provide an opportunity for young people of the region to express themselves in an artistic way; and to be a memorial to the 80,000 people who died, and to those who survived, the witnesses and victims of atrocities.

La Mariposa project is called so to remember the cultural background of Salvadorans -- the Maya culture. Ancient culture compared life to the butterfly. The butterfly invites us to enjoy life to its fullest, because the butterfly is fragile and dies easily -- so we must enjoy life while in earth, seeking peace and happiness.

## The El Salvador Book Project and Compas de SOL

This school year was the pilot year of Compas de SOL, a program to facilitate cultural education and exchange between classes in the United States and classes in the Salvadoran community schools. Classes from ten U.S. schools in six states participated this year, ranging in age from day care to high school. Some of the educational companionship activities included: a high school Spanish class in New York that made story books to send to El Salvador; a school in Vermont that kept track of all the miles they collectively walked throughout the year, with the goal of "reaching El Salvador" by May; children in a day care center in Indiana who drew pictures and auctioned them off to raise money for the book project. All Compas de SOL classes were asked to raise money for the project.

The Book Project aims to help establish reading libraries in the Salvadoran schools. Teachers and education committees in Cuscatlàn and Cabañas have already reviewed samples of books published by both Macmillan and Scholastic, and see these as vital resources for their classes. We plan to send 1,000 quality books this year.

# Land, Water & Development

Land and clean water are basic elements for the survival and self-development of Salvadoran communities. CoCo Development Alternatives has prioritized support for projects that will help guarantee land and clean water for communities in the provinces of Cabañas, Cuscatlàn and Usulutàn, where families broken by the war have united to build alternative, sustainable social and economic development models in their regions.

A central point of the peace accords signed between the Salvadoran government and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in 1992 created a Land Transfer Program (PTT).

Properties to be sold through the PTT include privately-owned land voluntarily offered for sale by its owners, and state-owned land released for sale by the government. Through the European Economic Community (EEC) and the Salvadoran Land Bank, which was largely financed by USAID, the Salvadoran government is to assist beneficiaries of the PTT with credits, at 6% interest rate payable over 30 years, with a 4-year grace period.

While the PTT process has proceeded successfully in some cases, many eligible beneficiaries have faced a series of problems. They still have no guarantee that

they won't one day be evicted and again be without land. And although some communities may have contracts to purchase land, the nearest source of clean water belongs to another landowner. Such is the case faced by various communities we support.

Compounding these problems is the ecological crisis in El Salvador which has affected land fertility and water availability throughout the country. The organization Eco-Guazapa reports that a 1989 study revealed 83% of El Salvador's land suffered serious nutrient depletion by soil erosion. The same report blames the national water crisis on widespread deforestation, and contamination of water sources by insufficient sewage and sanitation systems, industrial waste, and extensive use of chemical fertilizers.

All of these land and water issues are of primary concern for sustainable development, and peace, in El Salvador.

## CoCo Support for Land, Water and Ecology Projects

### **Potable Water and The New Life Water Program**

Last October, with a seed grant from the Presbyterian Hunger Program, CoCo purchased and shipped well drilling equipment to El Salvador, and sponsored the trip of two technicians from the California-based organization Lifewater International to train a Salvadoran drilling team. Due to rocky terrain and a low water table in Cuscatlàn, drilling was not successful there and investigation is now being made for piping water from the Guazapa Volcano. Other international institutions are also looking into collaborating in this regional project. In Usulutàn, the first test wells will be drilled in June. Eventually, the drilling rig will be donated to establish a self-sustaining small business run by members of Salvadoran communities. To date, seven U.S. communities have been raising funds to sponsor a 'Well of Companionship' in El Salvador.

### **Valle Nuevo, Cabañas Land Purchase**

Shortly after the signing of peace accords in 1992, the 200 families in the repatriated community of Valle Nuevo were faced with imminent eviction when an absentee landowner declared intent to sell to the first offer. The South-North Partners ministry of Reba Place Church in Evanston, IL contributed \$34,000 for a downpayment on 265 acres of land. Over 45 contributors from various states have helped raise an additional \$8,000, to bring the remaining fundraising goal of CoCo support for the final payment to \$12,000. The community of Valle Nuevo has committed to paying \$6,000 towards the purchase by the year 2000.

### **Eco-Guazapa and Reforestation**

The first Reforestation Brigade is scheduled to go to El Salvador June 20 - July 3. Brigade participants will each make a \$300 contribution to Eco-Guazapa, an ecological organization working in the region of Cuscatlàn. During the brigade, they will work with Eco-Guazapa in their reforestation efforts. We are looking for groups to arrange brigades for 1995!

### **El Sitio, Cuscatlàn Land Purchase**

The Toledo Area Committee on Central America (TACCA) in Ohio raised the final payment of their three-year commitment of \$18,750 to help the community of El Sitio purchase land. El Sitio, which is negotiating to purchase the land through the PTT, is considering using the contribution as a security deposit for guaranteeing the purchase.

Photo By Lois Kleffman



CoCo's Salvadoran Drilling Team in San Antonio, Cuscatlàn



# Companionship

The history and mission of CoCo are characterized by a commitment to justice and to the transformation of attitudes that permeate unjust relationships. This challenge to personal commitment and growth is the essence of 'companionship' in our program. It is an all-inclusive challenge to share together, learn together, work together, and to commit to a vision for the future together.

In our program activities that bring North Americans and Salvadorans in contact with each other, the challenge of companionship is complicated by the misconceptions and unjust attitudes that have been inherent in relations between North Americans and Latin Americans for more than 100 years. But by sharing our homes with each other, exchanging cultural gifts, engaging in challenging development projects together, new attitudes are created. This is the spirit of companionship we seek to encourage. And we believe this spirit is an essential element for sustainable development in the Americas.

## Companion Community Focus

### **Santa Marta - Takoma Park Companion Cities Project, MD Dumbarton United Methodist Church, DC**

During the past five years, numerous groups have organized local Companion Community projects to provide invaluable international support for resettlement communities in conflictive areas of El Salvador. Each U.S. Companion Community has evolved with its own style and character, always depending on a few dedicated leaders.

In this update, we would like to make special mention of two Companion Community groups in the Washington DC area which have worked together to provide on-going support for the community-based health program in Santa Marta and Valle Nuevo, Cabañas. During the past ten months, through the ¡Viva La Clínica! campaign, the Takoma Park - Santa Marta Companion Cities Project and the Dumbarton United Methodist Church raised \$13,000 as a contribution to the construction of the regional Santa Marta Health Center.

Nancy Chisholm of Takoma Park, and Connie Wilkinson and Mike Beard of Dumbarton UMC, travelled to Cabañas in March, and visited with members of the Cabañas health committees.

## PROGRAM ACTIVITIES REPORT

### **Fall '93 U.S. Speaking Tours**

Forty-three host organizers in 15 midwestern and east coast states made our Fall '93 speaking tours a success. Under the theme "El Salvador's Hope for Change: Can Democracy Exist without Development?", over 75 presentations were given in schools, universities, churches, communities, homes and civic clubs. Our featured Salvadoran speakers were Alfonso Rivas, President of the CRC; Miguel Rodriguez, Treasurer of DIMECONU (Usulután); and Maria Teresa Tula, U.S. Representative of Co-Madres, a human rights organization. Thanks to all of you who participated!

### **Dec. 27 - Jan 4 Bloomington IN Delegation**

Thirteen people participated on a delegation organized through the St. Paul Catholic Center and Office for United Ministries at Indiana University in Bloomington. Among the highlights was a personal meeting by delegation leaders with Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas. The delegation also visited San Rafael, Cuscatlán, where the Bloomington CoCo group has financed the construction of a school.

### **Jan 4 - 25 DePauw University Winter Term in Mission Trip (WTIM)**

For the second consecutive year, CoCo coordinated one of the WTIM trips of DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana. Forty-three people participated this year, helping to lay the foundation for the first phase of La Mariposa cultural center under construction in Cuscatlán. A medical team also worked with community health promoters during the three-week trip.

## **CoCo and the Salvadoran Elections**

From March 15 to March 23 a 16-member CoCo delegation was in El Salvador as official observers for the first municipal and national elections in El Salvador with full participation from all the political spectrum. This delegation was part of a national coalition, the U.S. Citizens Election Observer Mission (USCEOM), which sent a total of over 500 officially recognized observers to accompany the Salvadoran people in this important step towards a democratic society. CoCo staff served as provincial coordinators for the coalition in the provinces of Cabañas and Cuscatlán. For a copy of the USCEOM report on the elections, call 317/920-8643.

# CoCo Welcomes Our Initial Board of Directors!!

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