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## Chapter 9

# Evaluation Standards for Latin America and the Caribbean - Experimentation and Evolution

Ana Luisa Guzmán and Warren Crowther

**Abstract.** *This chapter reviews an excellent contribution to the development of evaluation standards for Latin America and the Caribbean developed by the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization (ReLAC), the Evaluation Capacity Development in Selected Countries in Latin America (FOCEVAL), the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DeVAL), and the Costa Rica Ministry of National Planning and Political Economics (MIDEPLAN). Lessons learned from experimentation in applying a code of ethics in the development of seven diverse and ambitious projects over a 10-year period in Costa Rica are discussed. The basic principles covered by the standards are posited, and the practical relevance, viability, and trade-offs, or relative emphasis in the evaluation and decision-making aspects of the projects, are analyzed. The proposed standards for Latin America and the Caribbean constitute an excellent guideline for applying and implementing the improvement of evaluation processes. This observation and analysis suggests an agenda for further debate, including the inclusion of additional evaluation standards.*

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Ana Luisa Guzmán, Latin American and Caribbean Network of Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization (ReLAC) and University of Costa Rica, [guzmaneste@hotmail.com](mailto:guzmaneste@hotmail.com); Warren Crowther, Independent Consultant, [warren13@racsa.co.cr](mailto:warren13@racsa.co.cr).

The Latin American and Caribbean Network of Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization (ReLAC), the Evaluation Capacity Development in Selected Countries in Latin America (FOCEVAL), the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DeVAL), and the Costa Rica Ministry of National Planning and Political Economics (MIDEPLAN) have all made an important contribution to the experimentation and evolution of standards for program evaluation in the region. In the first stage, many evaluators were consulted and a literature review was carried out regarding competencies and standards, including the evaluation standards used in United Nations (UN) agencies, internationally recognized partnerships, and other such initiatives. In 2015, a draft proposal of standards was circulated among and commented upon by interested members of the network, and in 2016 a published edition of the Evaluation Standards for Latin America and the Caribbean (EEALC; Rodríguez et al. 2016) was circulated and commented on by interested organizations and professionals.

During this period of elaborating and sharing criteria for the standards, a review of elements of ethical guidance—based on the code of ethics published by UNICEF (2002) for research, monitoring, and evaluation of programs and projects taking into account the rights and interests of children and adolescents—took place in Costa Rica.<sup>1</sup> Its basic principles can be applied to the target populations in the design and evaluation of the programs and projects catering to their rights and interests, and the use of action research methodologies. These same principles were adapted for other target populations, including low-income families needing assistance with initiatives in entrepreneurship, exceptional patients with serious illnesses, older adults, and communities and users affected by transportation and communications investments.

The experience with these projects is instructive regarding the need and conditions for an adequate set of standards, adapted to Latin American and Caribbean realities, while recognizing that although Costa Rica has a mixed population when it comes to ethnicity, urban and rural culture, economic conditions, and environment, it still represents only a fraction of the diversity that needs to be considered in the entire region.

The lessons learned from the demonstration projects are summarized in table 9.1. They highlight implications for the evolution of program evaluation standards for the region.

The most interesting of these experiences illustrate the ample options and major obstacles to some of the critical factors of quality monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of policies, programs, and projects (PPP), which not circumstantially have received the most intensive attention and development in the discussions regarding the EEALC.

Between the initial proposal and the latest version of the EEALC, there has been an impressive and promising advancement in the definition of these standards, particularly related to four major themes: relevance to decision

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to UNICEF (2002), attention was also given to two other norms: UNICEF Costa Rica (2000) and ICAP and UNDP (2003).

making; influence on decision making; validity of the evidence; and the fulfillment of preconditions. Table 9.1 illustrates the importance and value of these themes, as well as some nuances or complications that have not yet been broached in the standards, and are in constant evolution as their application is being monitored.

Some of the projects are reviewed in table 9.1, regarding what was intended, what resulted, and what was learned. These are all demonstration projects, initiated by the ProHumana21 Foundation between 2004 and 2014. They were undertaken with intensive grassroots participation and attempts to create prototypes or models of better practices, including more adequate impact assessment.

### **USING EVALUATION FOR DECISION MAKING**

This is mentioned in the EEALC: it is an important starting point, but it needs to be reviewed in order to consider programs and projects as subject to constant experimentation, and not just implementation and resolution of pre-determined terms of reference and premises. There are always both positive and negative surprises that affect the engagement, dimensions, and parameters of the M&E and decision-making processes of projects and their impacts. The projects reviewed in table 9.1 emphasize this.

It became apparent that in the implementation of these projects, there was no relationship between the relative gravity or threat of the situation discovered with innovative evaluation methods, and the amount of local and/or national interest that existed to deal with those facets of that situation, and in defining the projects' terms of reference. Thus a focus on the unexpected turned out to be more revealing—in either an instructive or a disturbing way—than a focus on the achievement of pre-established goals.

For example, it was observed that the resolution of many socio-environmental conflicts and medical pathologies led to unanticipated delayed effects in the form of new conflicts or pathologies. The apparent resolution of one socio-environmental conflict often leads to the unraveling of other conflicts, and the remission of one illness is often the preface to a later downturn in health. Thus, the adoption of a solution for one challenge can often create another challenge.

Another insight from analyzing these projects resulted in fostering comparative research and evaluation, which involved ambiguity in choosing the models and indicators that were sensitive to particular cultural and local realities, and those that were emphasized when comparisons were made. Yet, ironically, comparisons can help rather than hurt in this situation. The greatest "relevance" of an evaluation is not only in appraising how well preconceived challenges and the consequent predefined goals are being met, but also in identifying or uncovering the locally or presently unseen or unexpected factors: in this regard, comparative evaluation can actually be very helpful in making those factors more visible or well anticipated.

The periodic Latin American Development Administration Congresses (CLAD) are very instructive in comparing experiences: however, in the most recent congress, held in Chile in 2016, there was a lack of communication

between two main streams of work. There were several sessions dedicated to reviewing advances in PPP evaluation, including discussion of the EEALC. Other sessions were focused on program and project “innovation and government laboratory” advancements: yet it was noticeable that very few people who attended the evaluation sessions also attended the innovation sessions. Unfortunately, there was no discussion about the importance of assimilating the benefits of these approaches. We will readdress this perspective when we consider the importance of evaluating impact and not just results.

## HOW EVALUATION AFFECTS DECISION MAKING

The projects in Costa Rica have used action research methodologies to integrate, at the local level, the evaluation and decision-making processes. These projects have also invited—or pressured and educated—the target populations and other present stakeholders who sometimes met with resistance, to broaden their perspective on the relationship between evaluation and decision making, and how to most positively engage in them. Attention was given to questions of confidentiality and sensitivity of the evidence, and judgments in the evaluation, which prior to the evaluation should be agreed upon by key stakeholders.

In the projects reviewed in table 9.1, a general benefit was enhancement of the knowledge management capacities of the most active among the target populations, and at times of other stakeholders as well. However, this meant focusing more attention on the sensitivities—and sometimes uncomfortable ethical implications—of this knowledge management sharing and decision-making responsibility and privilege, and of the evidence itself. A major difficulty arises where a “culture of shame” prevails, meaning a general avoidance of sharing what could be sensitive or embarrassing information.

The common withholding or suppression of evaluation results was even more tense and awkward: this included evidence considered by one or more parties to be offensive to their agenda or interests, or potentially damaging to other parties.

## LIMITATIONS OF EVIDENCE VALIDITY

In the projects reviewed in table 9.1, it became evident that the more intimate and closely connected the evaluators were to the local details and consequences of PPP implementation, the greater the difficulties they faced in identifying evaluation indicators that were both suggestive of validity and of applicable practicality in the evaluation. This was also illustrated by empirical results highlighted throughout the analyzed literature review. That is, the indicators were more geared to their relatively easier application and to acceptability by data sources than to the pertinence of the evidence for the variables that were posited in each case. This review depicted inconsistencies between the connotations of the variables outlined in the conceptual or modeling configuration of what was being studied or evaluated, and what was evidenced through the practical indicators.

Pertinent to this are proposals regarding quality criteria for the selection of indicators. Somewhat different examples of such proposals have been offered by Stockmann and Crowther, both of whom have shown that “ample criteria” included some that in practice are not compatible with each other (Crowther 1999; Stockmann 2011).

This means that inevitably, in all evaluations, the predispositions of the evaluator (or decision makers) play a role regarding the overall criteria used for selecting indicators.

### **THE REQUIRED PRECONDITIONS FOR A PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION**

For almost any reputable and useful evaluation, considerable work has to be done just to create the preconditions. This has been the case for decades in Latin America, where the insistence on a precipitated or institutionalized evaluation procedure without these preconditions has come to denigrate the credibility of evaluation. Often those most affected—that is, either those being most closely evaluated or the major sources of evidence—might see program evaluation as, for example, lying, “tattling,” an intrusion. Or they might simply resist it altogether.

### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS AND ISSUES**

Different initiatives for developing evaluation standards have taken various positions regarding the four major themes, and constructive attention has been given to them in EEALC.

It is notable that with the exception of the requisite conditions for the evaluation, the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), in its 13 norms, tends to assign less attention to these four standards, and instead highlights the ones that EEALC has identified as the most difficult ones to resolve. For example, UNEG stresses impartiality, and many in UNEG would see impartiality as supporting and strengthening validity. However, UNEG is not explicit about the inherent limitations of evidence and judgment validity for example, regarding issues of sensitivity and confidentiality. On this last point, the American Evaluation Association’s Program Evaluation Standards more realistically assigns importance to “technically adequate” information.

In applying these standards, a general lesson from the projects shown in table 9.1 is that their compliance is fostered with the application of action research principles and methodology. In addition to complex planning and implementation of the evaluation process, more than the usual amount of human and economic resource dedication is also required. The target populations and other stakeholders are not readily prepared for the protagonist role they are invited to, or that they need to, assume: much preparation for this role is needed.

On the other hand, there are five more themes with which the projects faced more troublesome practical challenges, and for which, optimistically, the evolution of EEALC may provide solutions. These themes are: involvement of the principal stakeholders in decisions about the evaluations; examination

of the underlying values influencing the evaluations; impact; evaluator competencies; and the role of context.

### **DECISION MAKING: WHO DECIDES WHAT?**

The EEALC indicates that the main target population of the PPP are “groups affected by” the evaluation. Regarding the very diverse sets of responsibilities and/or privileges they should have in the evaluation and decision-making process, 16 different categories or segments of actors or stakeholders are designated, with some overlapping regarding both groupings and functions.

For the projects shown in table 9.1, the most interested segments of the population could be readily identified. However, some of the interested stakeholders demonstrated some degree of resistance to sharing or conceding their personal incidence in the decision making or real, informed participation in the design and evaluation of PPP, to those most affected by them. This resistance was less than expected, although it varied among localities and subcultures. With PPPs directed at the rights and interests of adolescents and youth, there was less adult centralism than anticipated, but there was much more than expected regarding PPPs directed at older adults, including among the professionals attending this generation.

### **UNDERLYING VALUES, OR CRITERIA, INFLUENCE WHAT IS BEING EVALUATED**

In the projects reviewed in table 9.1, the agendas of key stakeholders often did not coincide with the ethical standards the projects were trying to adopt: or they were not compatible with each other regarding the underlying values or criteria to be applied.

In these projects, there were numerous cases of unpreparedness for new challenges, and others of institutional units adhering to their agendas and general priorities, and seeking support for more coverage and technological upgrading rather than pertinence and realism in what they were offering. In such cases, substantive evaluation could seem very threatening.

The inherent or inevitable incidence of the evaluator’s (or decision maker’s) predisposition regarding the selection of indicators is presented in all areas of evaluations, since an external referent to the situation being evaluated is always being introduced either implicitly or explicitly -reporting that things go well or badly, better or worse, optimistically or fearfully, and so on. (Perhaps the exception to this is the response “accepted or tolerated” or “not accepted or tolerated.”) One can adopt a baseline or benchmark to show apparent progress or regression, but there is always that important question, which is usually unanswered—“In comparison to what?”—which is needed in order to conclude whether a “reasonable expectation” is being met. Where does this “reasonable expectation” come from? Not only is the lack of reference to a defined reasonable expectation a common deficit in evaluation: it is also lacking in almost all social, educational, and administrative research.

## TOWARD EVALUATING IMPACT

When comparing proposed evaluation standards, it is important to consider the connotations and meanings in different languages of the terminology being adopted. In fact, the same term can have different connotations even in different countries that speak the same language. That said, in the evolution of regional standards in Latin America and the Caribbean, the most consistently affirmed values, or criteria, have been utility, precision, pertinence, and timeliness.

A most concerning tendency in the region is placing much more emphasis on evaluating *results* than on evaluating *impact*, although increasing attention is being given to the latter. The positive side of the emphasis on results is that it gives more attention to the democratically elected government's compliance to the promises they have posited, or the expectations they have raised. But a downside is that it can lead to efforts to improve a PPP, or do a better job of managing it, when a real impact evaluation may indicate that it shouldn't be taking place at all, or that it needs major reform.

Impact as such is not mentioned in the EEALC, but there are interesting hints of it in the insistence that there should be a positive contribution to decision making, and the "quality of life" of the "beneficial public" and "other interested parties."

The UNEG norms make seven references to the evaluation of impact as an alternative to evaluating outcomes: output, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, value-for-money, and client satisfaction. But those norms don't really consider what impact as such entails.

For the projects summarized in table 9.1, a strong definition of impact has been adopted, which includes the added value of the target population regarding the most fundamental transformations of its quality of life; the target population having good knowledge of and insight into what *constitutes* and influences the quality of their lives; and consideration of the opportunity costs of all interested or affected stakeholders. This definition is not very operative, except as a point of reference to discuss with the key stakeholders, including the target populations. It means not just comparing yesterday or today with tomorrow, which is the usual manifestation adopted for a baseline: this kind of benchmarking needs to project *what was, or is, likely to occur* in a given period of time *without* the intervention that is being evaluated.

## WHAT COMPETENCIES SHOULD THE EVALUATOR HAVE?

This is a delicate topic: many people who have engaged in evaluation diligently and continuously do not begin to have the qualifications elaborated on in texts such as that of Rodriguez et al. (2016). Furthermore, some of the standard qualifications are extremely difficult to evaluate, such as whether an evaluator is being "objective" and "impartial." The emphasis on credibility puts this up for grabs: who will be most convincing to those who will be hiring the services of an evaluator? Comparing the terms of reference of such

qualifications—including for other projects with the same target populations as those in table 9.1—the differences as to expectations of competencies are monumental.

## TAKING CONTEXT INTO ACCOUNT

The importance assigned to “context” is often associated with recognition and respect for local and cultural differences. What is seldom discussed is how much subjectivity is inevitable in determining what “context” to consider, as almost all of the phenomena being evaluated are interrelated with infinite conditions or variables, and there is always a presumption as to where and how to draw the lines.

For Costa Rica and the other 40 countries categorized as high middle income, there is an additional limitation: not counting on think tanks dedicated to analyzing and comparing their commonalities, such as those that exist for the more developed and the less developed countries. There is little systematization of the common problems at this stage of development, which could help contextualize studies in the individual countries.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is extremely challenging to create a consensus about more precise standards especially regarding the last five mentioned above—decision making, the influence of underlying values or criteria, evaluating impact, evaluator competencies, and context—including an operative definition of impact.

Nonetheless, UNEG’s 13 norms and the 30 standards of the American Evaluation Association’s Program Evaluation Standards focus on these very expectations, in some cases mentioning them without really defining them.

These international norms and standards also give major attention to two issues that can be closely interrelated, and which the Latin American and Caribbean standards do not deal with directly: that is, human rights in general, and the well-being of those participating in the evaluation, not just those affected by its results. Human rights, and especially its byproducts of equity or equality, involve constant and inherent trade-offs. Fourteen operative definitions of “equity” that are commonly adopted in practice can be identified; all have substantial legitimacy, but they can also be quite contradictory with each other.

It is necessary to recognize the importance of the learning experiences presented in this work, both in terms of the results and the impacts obtained in the projects developed, and the constant search for high quality in their evaluation. This is especially true in the case of Latin America, where it will help to refine the evaluation standards with greater precision regarding the contexts and characteristics of the programs and projects of the region.

The standards for Latin America are also a guide, a way forward in the design and execution of evaluations that will provide greater knowledge, clarity, and understanding of the contexts in which policies, programs, and projects are being developed, and will thus improve evaluation processes.



**TABLE 9.1 Demonstration projects using research action and participatory evaluation: relevant contributions to evaluation standards**

<b>1. Education and guidance counseling that intends to be more ample, realistic, and personalized, with the development and validation of a website, and didactic modules</b>	
<b>Back-ground</b>	<p>The deficiency in guidance counseling appears to be the biggest generalized abuse of adolescents in the country, leading to much frustration and unfortunate decisions by youth, and contributing to the greatly increasing nonworking youth population and violence. Making it worse has been civic education that has encouraged students to cheat on their civics graduation exams to misconstrue the need for improvements and thus for their positive contributions. It has been especially hard for today's young adults (aged 20–35) who are of a baby boom generation for which the country did not prepare. They are undereducated (only 40% have a high school diploma) and have collided with a depressed employment market</p>
<b>Intent for target population</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Emphasis was on the student being able to intelligently evaluate and choose his or her best prospects.</li> <li>▪ Development of a website on how to choose which university or technical educational majors/specialties are most needed in the labor market and which are accessible given admissions quotas.</li> <li>▪ Experimentation with guidance discourses and didactic modules to help in choosing high school and university majors and specialties, and to understand the complementary value of virtual education.</li> <li>▪ Focus was on those entering their last year of high school before choosing university majors when registering for the admissions exam, those in 9th grade who often can change their category of high school, and those who must choose a category on entering 7th grade.</li> <li>▪ Before giving group and individual feedback to the high school students, survey results were shared with the educators.</li> <li>▪ Promotion of more forthright civic education that is honest about where youth is needed.</li> <li>▪ Experimentation was undertaken largely by university graduates and professors of guidance counseling</li> </ul>
<b>Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The survey was undertaken in 38 of Costa Rica's 81 local governments (municipalities), with 19,000 current or potential university and high school students, and the general response of the great majority was gratitude; it was undertaken in 100 mostly high schools, plus a few graduating 6th grade classes of elementary schools in low-income neighborhoods.</li> <li>▪ In numerous cases, the presentation of student survey results surprised the high school educators.</li> <li>▪ Some high school directors were resentful, because with this information, many of their students changed their schools to a different category; the project did, however, succeed in greatly increasing the enrollment of elementary school graduates as a result of the counseling</li> </ul>

<p><b>Results</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ In a follow-up study of youth who had received this guidance five years earlier, most had continued with their university studies and judged the guidance as having been helpful; surprisingly, they had been very accurate in anticipating the practical problems they would encounter, such as socioeconomic background and family dynamics in pursuing their preferred prospects.</li> <li>■ The elementary school graduates of very low-income neighborhoods were registered in high schools generally not of the student's preference, but rather responding to the parent's dominant criteria of security and transportation; therefore, the discourse was altered on this, telling students they could choose a different category when finishing the 9th grade.</li> <li>■ Initiation of a comparative study between countries regarding civics education pinpointed the influence of the legitimization or not of militarization (given that Costa Rica has no military)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lessons learned</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The target population was mostly helpful in monitoring the effects and impacts of attempts at better counseling practices.</li> <li>■ This has not led to a generalized application of the better practices; attempts were made to identify the major sources of resistance to generalizing their adoption, or even to evaluation of standing procedures, particularly as this resistance was justified by referral to intellectual and organizational autonomy and/or authority that educational institutions or units insist on for themselves.</li> <li>■ This resistance was very strong by universities, which are influenced by professional associations and are very slow to create new majors, specialties, and courses, and to resist the notion that guidance counseling should be more realistic—which is needed to break the tendency that the most-solicited majors are the ones leading to severe underemployment, and those majors highlighted for meeting international accreditation standards rather than for their national relevance, while there are great needs of determined specialists often in the same professions.</li> <li>■ The surge of new categories of high schools caught the existing elementary and high schools unprepared, and the latter often put up obstacles against more free choice for the students.</li> <li>■ The Public Education Ministry was adamant in not addressing or even wanting to hear about conflicts within its own units that are affecting student decision making, such as the conflict between civics education, apparent entrepreneurship programs, and realistic counseling; however, with a change of government, the ministry has indicated interest in taking lessons from this experience.</li> <li>■ The project allowed the students a role of censorship: it was important to recognize that many students—more of middle-class than low-income neighborhoods—were emphatic about not wanting their parents involved in the evaluation and selection of a category of high school or of a university major; where possible, counseling was offered to parents, but insisting that the students could choose whether to extend the invitation to their parents</li> </ul>

<b>2. Identification and creation of windows of opportunity and necessity for professional and technical human resources in the zone of residence, especially of youth, to reverse their tendency to identify their best future prospects as being distant from that zone of their country, and the adaptation of formal and parallel education to prepare them for what is most relevant to where they live</b>	
<b>Back-ground</b>	Local opportunities and the needs for such competencies, more as entrepreneurship than as employment, are generally ignored in community development and education plans. Most rural and many suburban communities export the resources they most need for their development, i.e., their more educated youth, even though their vocational interests may coincide with needs or potential opportunities in the local zone. Meanwhile, university and high school students undertake their required field projects, including those of community service, with very little (and at times negative) consequences for the community or target population; the discipline; or their own professional portfolios.
<b>Intent for target population</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The identification of the opportunities and need for professional and technical human resources in each zone, using field research and community service projects of university and high school students and community participation workshops to do this.</li> <li>▪ Incidence in the curriculum to respond to those spaces and prospects of the students to respond to or develop them, and promotion of the use of virtual education.</li> <li>▪ Field practice for students, e.g., regarding program evaluation, local social environmental conflicts, ecotourism opportunities, and architecture for schools or community services, all promoting the idea of conforming to a niche.</li> <li>▪ Workshops and follow-up in entrepreneurship, with help in getting the required financial, technical, and institutional support.</li> <li>▪ Attempts to influence governmental agencies, NGOs, community inter-institutional coordination commissions, and international cooperation to recognize the need for this, and to take lessons learned from the project.</li> <li>▪ Seek ways to enable the community to have what it lacks now, which is intelligent planning, design, and evaluation of its underlying and most fundamental transformations.</li> </ul>
<b>Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2,000 students (fewer than expected) receiving guidance counseling in many local governments also participated in field practices related to their vocational interests; many were made more conscious of zonal needs and opportunities for their intended professional or vocational prospects, or those they are interested in. In some cases there has been immediate interest by prospective employers, such as in updated accounting and informatics for commerce of artisanal products.</li> <li>▪ A few technical high schools experimented with some curricular additions, like educational ecotourism. In one local government, the lowest rated in the UN Life Quality Index, the project helped bring a new technical high school with recently created (and long needed) specialties for such schools.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Results</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ University students of 18 majors in 6 universities participated, annexing and adapting their field projects to support the investigation and development of development needs and opportunities in the participating communities. Also, many high school students contributed to this with their community service projects.</li> <li>■ In the review of Project 3 below, the subject of entrepreneurship is elaborated upon somewhat.</li> <li>■ Extensive bibliographies, citing as many as 400 research reports, have been prepared in each of 4 local governments, with copies including many of the cited documents, to local authorities, and to public and school libraries.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lessons learned</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The potential for much more relevant student field practice seemed quite evident, except that it is so very difficult to get the established governmental and NGO institutions to readdress their agendas and methodologies: some are set in their ways, and some are influenced by the agendas of international cooperation. Even some that highlighted youth participation in their discourse were not receptive to receiving and using the interest profiles of local youth that were offered to them.</li> <li>■ There were numerous university students interested in undertaking their obligatory field activities (thesis or other graduation projects, internships, or community service) in these subjects, and the project urged them to do this in their family's residential zone. However, the universities in general are very poorly organized for such projects to be relevant in the terms the project has promoted (for the student's professional portfolio, for the community, and for the discipline). Therefore a number of initiatives were curtailed.</li> <li>■ Some organizations have been influenced to take lessons from this experience, and to adapt their agendas and methodologies, but the evident need for this is being met only fragmentally.</li> <li>■ The use of our bibliographies of research on local realities (a large proportion being university theses and field reports), highlighting substantial documented local empirical intelligence, has been very sporadic. Both external and local organizations prefer to embark with their preconceptions, immediate experiences, and agendas, and not be distracted by substantiated evidence of local realities.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3. Social and business entrepreneurship, especially of community and agro-ecotourism projects, small businesses for low-income families, and youth initiatives</b></p>	
<p><b>Back-ground</b></p>	<p>Numerous studies of social entrepreneurship show that most projects have less impact than expected, such as in rural community tourism, and family business projects, including those that had received training in entrepreneurship and project development. Most are very deficient in key ways, and are not adequately prepared to deal with critical factors: most family businesses do not survive more than a few years.</p>

<p><b>Intent for target population</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Workshops and monitoring or follow-up (including incubation), with a focus on an operative plan resolving the critical factors of the efficacy of such entrepreneurship, including segmentation of the market or beneficiaries; adjustment of the products' characteristics; realistic financial analysis; the use of information technology in marketing and transaction with the users, complementation among projects instead of overly zealous competitiveness, and in many cases, the advantages of emphasizing the social and ecological benefits of the initiative.</li> <li>■ Visiting the location of each project before the workshop, in order to assure better advice from the instructors and better understanding and preparation of the entrepreneurs for what a focus on efficacy entails.</li> <li>■ Periodic updating of a database with numerous (more than 60) sources for financing of these projects, with emphasis on donations. What are updated with regard to the financial sources are the themes of interest, conditions for soliciting the funds, and their approximate availability.</li> <li>■ Forming of facilitators of entrepreneurship.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Results</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Some community entrepreneurship has been undertaken with our help, especially in cultural activity, and much family entrepreneurship as well, especially in tourism, clothing, culinary, beautician, informatics, the value-added chain of agro-products, and health service endeavors.</li> <li>■ Numerous workshops have been undertaken, with a huge drop-off of those indicating interest to those with regular assistance. A big factor in the drop-off was our warning that the curriculum was demanding, requiring perseverance and patience (especially with the bureaucracy), and particularly with regard to financial analysis (although many with little formal education were able to process it with our help).</li> <li>■ It appears that by far most that have regular assistance in the workshop do continue with their projects, and obtain the needed support (over 90% of the low-income women who solicited funds from a special government fund with our help, compared to less than 20% of requesters in general).</li> <li>■ Very few have taken up the offer to form and give diplomas to facilitators of entrepreneurship, although demand for this is very high.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lessons learned</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The project's curriculum has been criticized for being very demanding by various institutions and instructors who offer workshops and incubation in entrepreneurship. However, this exacting curriculum responds to studies indicating how few entrepreneurial projects succeed even somewhat near expectations, and the need to focus on critical factors of efficacy. Thus, an attempt has been made to emphasize more practical help than academic assistance.</li> <li>■ There have been very variable differences of grades of commitment and follow-through among the communities and the families that have participated with entrepreneurial projects. The reasons for this are being analyzed by monitoring the perspectives and decisions of the entrepreneurs. There seems to be a complex set of personal, social, economic, and political factors involved.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Lessons learned</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A greatly increasing number of families who have serious health problems have participated. They are desperately seeking income to pay for private care, given the huge waiting lists in public health care services. This of course requires great attention to how to address this combination of health and financial crises.</li> <li>▪ Much depends on the local counterpart organizations that solicited this project, and those that either enjoin or distance themselves from entrepreneurial initiatives.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Attention to the increased violence in communities and schools, along with its effects; and of intrafamily violence on the psychosocial, vocational, and civic prospects for youth; and to the need to conciliate the emphasis on containing human violence with adequate preparation for disasters and emergencies</b></p>	
<p><b>Back-ground</b></p>	<p>The major burden of responsibility in the Law of Protection of Children and Adolescents goes to educators in schools, who receive very little help with carrying it out. The programs of prevention of suicide, femicide, and abuse in general do not respond to underlying factors or statistical tendencies. The Manual of the National Emergency Commission with the Ministry of Education on how to prepare for disasters and emergencies, including brigades and simulation, is horribly unrealistic if one takes into consideration lessons learned from the earthquakes in Haiti and Mexico, as well as incidents in Costa Rica.</p>
<p><b>Intent for target population</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Workshops for youth facilitators of peace and security in their schools and communities, in combination with the Ministry of Justice and Peace, Municipalities, and other agencies dedicated to the subject.</li> <li>▪ Advice to school student commissions dedicated to the theme.</li> <li>▪ Workshops for educators on how to assist adolescents traumatized by violence, indicating that there is a government agency to help them in case of reprisals.</li> <li>▪ To create a commission on how to mitigate the huge arrival of so many arms, drugs, fugitives (including pedophiles) into the country, and the impact of the romanticizing of violence, most of this from the United States.</li> <li>▪ On-site evaluation of how to conciliate the great attention to containing human violence, by enclosing the students and educators in barbwire fencing, small gates, and guards (who are often off on errands), and lack of the open spaces not under roofs and ceilings, with realistic preparation for the mass movement of students, educators, rescuers, hysterical parents, and water, sediments, and lack of electricity in case of a disaster such as an earthquake, fire or huge storm.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Results</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Only two local governments responded to the concern about the contradiction between measures of containing human violence and preparation for disasters and emergencies, facilitating an investigation, which made recommendations to 17 schools. However, technical solutions for key problems, such as economical remote locks that the guards can handle at a distance and that are not dependent on the electrical system have not been found.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Results</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ In two other local governments, there was a surprising regularity of attendance at our workshops for 125 youth facilitators of peace and security in their schools and communities (including students from 25 high schools), given the schedule of 6 all-day Saturday sessions, and the distances to travel that were required. Through gaining confidence with the students, and interviewing them, it was understood that the great majority were at least partially motivated because they have violent internal family situations, and most had not shared that information with anyone.</li> <li>■ Naturally, they contributed considerably to penetrating the world of violence in which they are living, and are observing.</li> <li>■ The students gained confidence by their preparing 25 videos of their own artistic creations, including themes not presented in the conferences of experts and authorities. Their artistic renditions have been circulated to many schools and local child protection committees.</li> <li>■ Advice was given to municipal commissions, educators, and student commissions on their respective work plans regarding violence, and help in articulating with local agencies.</li> <li>■ Several high schools enabled the training of educators on how to attend to adolescents traumatized by violence.</li> <li>■ The government agency in charge of helping endangered victims and witnesses did not show an interest in an offer to create a video about their services to circulate among educators.</li> <li>■ This project was curtailed abruptly, as the Ministry of Education created new protocols, insisting that they were to be “supreme and exclusive,” although they were not adapted to the realities discovered in the demonstration projects.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lessons learned</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Organized commissions in two municipalities facilitated the project’s activity of the youth in favor of more peace and security in the community, and officials in two other municipalities facilitated inspections on how to prepare schools better, with periodic evaluation of what was undertaken, until the project was curtailed abruptly. The Public Education Ministry is now, several years later, reviewing what happened in this regard.</li> <li>■ The last few years we have attended 11 forums on dealing with violence in communities and schools in Costa Rica, with more than 65 conferences by international experts and national counterparts of executing agencies, of which very few shared lessons of the realities of their field experiences. By far most made propaganda for what was and will be intended. Several key themes or factors in the game were never mentioned in the conferences, and only in a few cases was there opportunity for discussion.</li> <li>■ The governmental and university organizations dedicated to preparation for disasters showed no interest in the problem of conflict of measures regarding violence that have put so many students and educators in jeopardy. This is now being undertaken, but the criteria for selecting model schools are very deficient and impractical; and the models have serious defects. Hopefully, this new program will take lessons from what was undertaken by the project.</li> </ul>

<b>5. Taking lessons from exceptional patients, with due attention to critical factors that are receiving inadequate attention</b>	
<b>Back-ground</b>	<p>Many recent panel studies of clinical trials of oncological patients in different countries show that 5–10% of patients survive more than three times the average life span of all patients receiving treatment. There is a great need to draw lessons from the experience of these and other exceptional patients.</p>
<b>Intent for target population</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Anthologies of biographies of exceptional patients to see what antecedents, conditions, coping, and complementary treatments they have or have adopted.</li> <li>▪ Special attention to the huge challenges for the family caregiver, internal familial tensions, impact on family children and adolescents, medical and neuropsychological services, support groups, and implicit suicide chosen by so many ill people who are suffering more financially, or for other reasons, than physically or emotionally.</li> <li>▪ Wide circulation of these lessons, to enhance medical and neuropsychological attention beyond just following epidemiological tendencies, to help transcend those tendencies; this can take the form of textbooks, manuals for patients and family caregivers, protocols for medical personnel and neuropsychologists, indicators for researchers, and brochures for children and adolescents.</li> <li>▪ Helping with comparative (and hopefully also international) studies of R&amp;D on these patients, with an emphasis on M&amp;E of the impact of agency programs for patients and family caregivers.</li> </ul>
<b>Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Intensive research is in process in very extraordinary cases to serve as prototypes for more extensive studies.</li> <li>▪ Preliminary findings have been shared with medical personnel and neuropsychologists, family caregivers of dementia and palliative care patients, and with support groups—e.g., for the 115 Costa Rican cancer patients who suffered overirradiation in their cobalt treatments.</li> <li>▪ Some exceptional university programs and NGOs in public health do show interest in what is being discovered, and in seeing how to adjust their agendas and procedures accordingly, especially with family caregivers.</li> <li>▪ Key challenges continue to be treated very marginally or exceptionally for the seriously ill, including exceptional patients who are also being evaluated: e.g., children in families with a medical crisis or premature death of a very ill sibling or parent; in general, intrafamily relationships that are so often tense and conflictive, affecting both the patient and the key family caregiver.</li> <li>▪ Social health agencies and programs interested in impact M&amp;E of their programs are being helped to engage university students undertaking their fieldwork or internships, with the intention that when feasible they can elaborate on and test badly needed protocols.</li> </ul>



<p><b>Lessons learned</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The experience of 115 cancer patients who in 1996 suffered overradiation is a prelude to what is evident in Costa Rica and even more elsewhere, such as the United States: that legal, paradigmatic, and ideological currents can greatly impede due attention to factors that can explain the prolonging and quality of life for exceptional patients.</li> <li>■ The emphasis has been on indemnification for malpractice palliative care, ideological debates regarding euthanasia, and the usual benchmarks in clinical trials, at the expense of due attention to the possibility of prolonging the length and quality of patients' lives.</li> <li>■ A key problem for evaluation can be the chaos or "snarl" in handling patient medical records, including legal handling.</li> <li>■ Family caregivers are more receptive to taking lessons from exceptional patients, but they are imbued with very haphazard support for what they have to resolve, and ironically the meager attention they do receive focuses almost exclusively on some of the onerous tasks before them, and not on the personal benefits they often derive from caregiving; this is evident in the most frequently used questionnaires and protocols for caregivers.</li> <li>■ The most positive impact has been with patients, but the impact is limited by the enclosed perspectives of the general discourse on this subject, and that of professional and informal caregivers.</li> <li>■ There is attention to an incipient movement, especially in Europe, to alter the perspective of medical personnel and neuropsychologists on this matter, e.g., that palliative care can be given early on, and may assure more prolongation as well as quality of life, not just preparation for a more serene death.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Knowledge management for older adults</b></p>	
<p><b>Back-ground</b></p>	<p>Costa Rica's legislation is rather unique in recognizing the importance of two particular interests with regard to older adults: to enhance, adapt, and take advantage of their accumulated empirical intelligence; and to have a direct role in the design and evaluation of programs and projects for their generation. However, we see very little application of these principles.</p>
<p><b>Intent for target population</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Guidance on recapitulation of his or her accumulated intelligence, and how to transmit the lessons and benefits of that knowledge to succeeding generations.</li> <li>■ Voice and vote in the design and evaluation of the programs and projects intended to enhance the older adult's quality of life.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Results</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ There has been spotty acceptance among some public and private agencies in helping foster and organize this initiative, but overall there have been many obstacles.</li> <li>■ There has been much less progress than hoped for with these intentions, and thus with the evaluation of the experience.</li> <li>■ In one suburban zone, an older adult association is strongly committed to pursuing these intentions; which offers some hope.</li> </ul>

<b>Lessons learned</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Older adults, including the more educated, believe that they are to be retired, respected, entertained, and perhaps educated in some subjects, but not with the type of activity intended in this project.</li> <li>▪ To our surprise, much more than with professionals attending to adolescents and youth, where adult-centrism was expected (in projects 1–4 above), those attending to older adults generally were adamantly against these objectives, possibly fearing a conflict between the need for caregiving and program management.</li> <li>▪ The older adult is beset with stigmas held by others, and even with self-adoption of such stigma.</li> </ul>
<b>7. Effects on communities and users of transportation and communications public service investments in buffer, forest, plantation, and mining zones</b>	
<b>Back-ground</b>	<p>There is a strong sense that these investments enhance transitory exploitation and not sustainable development of these zones, contributing linking to socio-environmental conflicts; great distortions in the added value chain of local products; and higher user costs affecting all sectors. This is an example of a problem or conflict resolution apparently being a predictable precedent of others.</p>
<b>Intent for target population</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To know the role of transportation and communications in the evolution of community and family economic sustenance and survival strategies.</li> <li>▪ To study the options and the predominant criteria of investments in these sectors.</li> <li>▪ To know the role of the predominant models for these investments and protocols by academics and international cooperation.</li> </ul>
<b>Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Initial studies of Central Appalachia in the United States, and central and southern Costa Rica.</li> <li>▪ Probing of other case studies and a historical overview of the application of international cooperation models in Latin America.</li> <li>▪ Preliminary results indicate historical adoption of similar investment models of earlier private investors and later public agencies.</li> <li>▪ The highly influential evolution (really, several huge evolutions) of the globalization strategy of transnational corporations has not been well addressed in economic development studies of Latin America.</li> </ul>
<b>Lessons learned</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The significance of this for the community and families who live in it has been largely overlooked by economic historians and anthropologists.</li> <li>▪ Interviews with older residents of these zones give inconsistent versions of community and family history; there is a need for more creative methods, such as theatrical representations, of that reality.</li> <li>▪ This appears to vouch for the great need in Central America of R&amp;D-focused university majors in transportation economics.</li> </ul>

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