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NetCorps Pilot Project: Angola

Final Report & Program Guide

IDRC Study/Acacia Initiative
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Contents:

PART ONE: FINAL REPORT

A. Project Overview

B. Project Activities

1. Networking support for Development Workshop
2. GIS support for Development Workshop
3. Experience and Benefit for Participants
4. Follow-up Activities
5. Communications & press coverage
6. Financial Reports

PART TWO: PROGRAM GUIDE & LESSONS LEARNED

A. Introduction

B. The Project Team

C. Smart Choices

1. Selection & Training
2. Travel Experience in Angola
3. Work Experience in Angola
4. Follow-up

D. Lessons Learned

1. Selection & Training
2. Travel Experience in Angola
3. Work Experience in Angola
4. Follow-up

E. Working documents

1. Suggested Timeline
2. Checklist for participants' preparation

PART ONE: FINAL REPORT

A. PROJECT OVERVIEW

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In the fall and winter of 1996 and 1997, the Centre for Community & Enterprise Networking (C\ECEN) developed and managed a pilot project for "NetCorps" on behalf of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Industry Canada.

The project originated with a request for technical assistance from Development Workshop (DW), a Canadian-based NGO working in Luanda, Angola and Guelph, Ontario. DW and C\ECEN collaborated to select two unemployed Cape Bretoners with technical skills which DW needed but had difficulty locating local expertise in Angola.

After three months of training and preparation, the participants traveled to Angola on January 21, 1997 and returned April 21, 1997.

The objectives of the project were:

- to assist Development Workshop to work more effectively through access to technical expertise. The expertise sought was in two specific areas: Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and setup and maintenance of a Linux/UNIX Internet server.
- to provide meaningful training and work experience for two unemployed individuals from Cape Breton, which is currently experiencing the highest levels of unemployment in Canada.
- to gain experience and lessons which will aid in organizing similar "technology transfer" projects and opportunities with Information & Communications Technology in developing countries.
- to develop a relationship between the partner organization which may lead to further joint endeavors

All of these goals have been realized, and C\ECEN would like to acknowledge the following partners as essential in making this project a success:

International Development Research Centre (IDRC)
Industry Canada
Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)
TAGS (The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy), and particularly the Fisherman's Union
Representative to TAGS, Eileen MacNeil
Development Workshop (Luanda, Angola and Guelph, Ontario)
Canada World Youth
University College of Cape Breton (UCCB)
Geographic Information Systems Lab, UCCB
CompuClone Computer Solutions, Inc.

This document includes a final report on the project as well as a Manual to guide others embarking on similar activities.

B. PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The following is a detailed account Blair McInnis and Glenn Graham's work while in Angola. The description is written in Blair's words.

1. Networking support for Development Workshop

a) set up Linux box

The first thing I did was try to install Linux on a computer. As I was the only person there who knew how to do this I was on my own. This proved to be a real learning experience for me because as anyone who uses Linux knows it is a very fussy about the type of hardware that can be used. I ran into problems with Hard drives, Video cards, LAN cards, and motherboards. These problems were compounded because there was no technical support for me to turn to as is the case in industrial countries. At home technical support is just a phone call away.

After several attempts I finally had Linux up and running. I was told later that they were surprised that I had done it as quickly as I had because it had taken a Linux expert, from South Africa, two weeks to install it the first time. I then established a connection with the other Linux Box at Ebonet, the ISP in Luanda. Now I had to wait for a technician from Ebonet to configure the e-mail connection using UUCP.

b) set up Local Area Network in office

While I waited for Ebonet's technician to get back to me I started the setup of a Local Area Network (LAN) to be used by Development Workshop for printing and file management. First I set up two work stations with network cards and software and successfully connected them together for test purposes. Then I began to install network cards and the cable to connect the entire office to the LAN. At this time I was using Windows for Workgroups as the operating system because this is what DW wanted. I was successful in upgrading some of their existing work stations and set up new Pentium Computers for use by the staff.

c) configured new equipment and upgraded old

This is where changes started to happen because Allan Cain the director of DW and other staff members realized I had a great deal of technical training and they wanted to utilize as much as they possibly could. This meant the ordering of six new Laptop computers and new software. The software included the upgrade to Win/95 and Corel Suite. This meant resetting all the existing work stations to use Win/95 and Corel, which I did.

d) trained replacement

My next assignment was to train a local Angolan to take over my duties when I returned home. This involved a compromise of English and Portuguese in order to communicate. We first just talked to establish a starting point for me to find out how much computer training she had. I then began to teach her LAN management and Computer Hardware. This process was made more difficult than I had first anticipated because in Luanda the electricity is not very stable. At DW they had a generator but just before the Angolan woman started to work for them it stopped working, leaving us at the mercy of the city's power. And with days of having no power it made computer training very slow and difficult.

I also trained local staff on the use of the LAN with regards to security, printing, and file management. Also as part of the DW staff I was called upon to give help to other Non-Government Organizations that used Angonet for E-mail.

e) review: what was planned vs. what actually happened

The primary reason I was sent to Luanda was to be trained in the E-mail set up by the System

Administrator, Haymee, and to look after it while she was doing other things. But by the time I got there, Haymee did not work at DW, and in fact was working for Ebonet, a for-profit Internet Service Provider which is in direct competition with Angonet, the e-mail service provided by DW. As I had no help with the e-mail I was forced to learn it on my own and actually had it running very smoothly. Then I trained the Angolan woman to use the e-mail set up and to manage it as I had.

This is one of the instances where no amount of training or pre-departure briefing would have helped -- it was just something that happened that was unforeseen. The only thing that I can tell someone else who finds themselves in this same situation is get used to it and don't take it personally.

2. GIS support for Development Workshop

a) GIS work

Glenn was originally asked to set up a Geographic Information Systems station, but both technical and political difficulties prevented that project from getting off the ground.

The main reasons that the GIS project was less successful were: 1) The free software that DW had acquired, and with which they expected to do the project, was not what they needed; and 2) Because of the political climate in Angola, getting access to quality maps was next to impossible. Glenn put Allan on to the right software and started to show him how to use it. If there had been a counterpart for Glenn to work with (Allan's time was very limited), the training might have gone further.

b) other work

When not pursuing the GIS project, Glenn worked closely with Blair and assisted with the work described above.

3. Experience and Benefit for Participants

a) Blair McInnis

project sponsored 3-day intensive UNIX workshop

internship with C\NEN included familiarization with Community Networks and Canada's Community Access Program

first work experience in computer field

Blair has recently resubmitted his resume to nine companies which declined to interview him last year because of "no work experience"

Blair continues to work with C\NEN on a voluntary basis to develop collaborations with local manufacturing firms to develop equipment needed in Angola

If future contracts are established with DW or other international organizations, C\NEN would strongly consider re-hiring Blair to work in our office.

pride, confidence, and learning. In his own words:

"I was told by Allan Cain himself that I should be proud of what I accomplished in Luanda. I was told by people from many different countries such as England, Norway, and South Africa that Luanda is one of the hardest, if not the hardest, places in the world to get anything done. There are many obstacles to overcome such as political and social. Although there was no war going on when I was there, it had not ended all that long ago. At one point during the war one million guns had been dumped in the streets for people to arm themselves and these guns are still out there. There are people in the streets who, because of land mines, are missing limbs and they beg for money.

"I was told by people who work for DW that in order to get better at the language I should just get out there and use it. I think that in the situation that they were in, making food and water available to people this is true. My situation was different in the fact that I was a technician and some people who worked there saw me as someone taking a job from local people. One instance I remember was when I wanted to purchase some Cable for DW. I was not speaking Portuguese and the guy at the counter just sat and looked at me as if he could not understand me. When I finally made known what I wanted, he smiled and said in English "Oh you want 40 meters of Coax Cable".

"I also learned that looking after a LAN includes looking after not just the computers and printers but looking after people who use these machines. The fact is that without the users themselves there is no need for System Administrator. The constant change in the computer industry makes keeping on top of the latest Software and Hardware a steady job not only for users but for the people who have to fix problems that arise with the implementation of new products."

b) Glenn Graham

project sponsored 3-day intensive UNIX workshop

internship with GIS Lab at UCCB gave him valuable course-type experience with experts

at the end of his term in Angola, Development Workshop offered Glenn two paid work opportunities. One offer was to stay in Angola for an additional 3-4 months, but Glenn was looking forward to coming home. The second offer was to assist with a DW construction project in Paris on the way home. Glenn took this position and worked for two weeks in France.

Glenn's aim is to get into an advanced degree program in GIS, and he feels the Angola and France work experience will make his applications strong.

4. Follow-up Activities

C\ICEN has been asked to recruit an expert Network Administrator to visit DW for two weeks in September (a contract directly with DW).

C\ICEN may act as a broker for hardware and software equipment purchases for DW, since equipment is least expensive in Canada. This may expand to other procurement contracts with international organizations.

C\ICEN is discussing development of power supplies and other hardware here in Cape Breton for use in Angola. CompuClone Computer Solutions (who conducted the UNIX training for this project), and BayTech in Glace Bay have both indicated an interest and an ability to pursue these ideas.

Pending establishment of better Internet communications between Angola and Canada,

C\CEN could offer remote technology support for the NGO. For instance, DW could e-mail a question about a software conflict which C\CEN could research and then send complete information back to DW. Because of unreliable power supplies, time-taking research on the Internet is much better accomplished outside of Angola.

In the event that a follow-up project is organized in Angola, there is a possibility that the participants' services could be "contracted out" to other local NGOs, many of which called on Blair and Glenn's service on a voluntary basis. The NPA (a Norwegian development organization), for instance, would likely have a budget for this sort of service.

5. Communications & press coverage

a) Outside media

The project was well-received locally, with two live interviews (one at the beginning and one at the end) on CBC radio.

The *Cape Breton Post* wrote an excellent article on Blair's return from Angola (see attached).

While press releases were sent to national newspapers, television and radio, it's clear that next time there will have to be a more concerted effort to get this kind of coverage.

b) Internal communications

Initially, this report and Program Guide were intended to consist primarily of a compiled diary of the two participants while in Angola. This proved not to be feasible, for two main reasons:

frequent power outages and unreliable connection to Green Net in England meant that approximately four out of every five e-mails sent (from either end) were not received. We realized the gap in communications some way through the project when it was, in a sense, too late. The same issue was a complication in the early stages of the project when C\CEN attempted a needs assessment and detailed job descriptions, but noticed that communications with DW were intermittent and took time. One recommendation for the future is to number all correspondence so it will be apparent when information is missing.

the participants did not have as clear a guideline on what type of diary to keep as they might have. Because the task seemed daunting and messages seemed destined not to be read, the participants focused on their local work priorities.

6. Financial Reports

PART TWO: PROGRAM GUIDE & LESSONS LEARNED

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Summary

In the fall and winter of 1996-97, the Centre for Community & Enterprise Networking (C\CEN) of the University College of Cape Breton, organized a pilot project for "NetCorps" in Angola. We selected and trained two Cape Bretoners -- one recent University graduate and one ex-fish cutter -- to provide needed technical support for ongoing operations of an existing non-profit development organization in Angola. The two participants were selected in September, interned and went through various training experiences for four months, and departed for Angola in January. The pair returned in April, 1997.

2. How to use this Guide

This Program Guide builds on the experience we gained through developing the Angola project, and also through coordinating a number of ongoing youth placements in Nova Scotia. It is structured so that the reader can follow our journey in developing this first overseas NetCorps project. Because every country's needs and assets will be very different, we caution the reader that this is not intended as a Manual which can be followed without fail. Instead, these thoughts are meant to assist those developing similar projects to ask the right questions in the planning phase, and to recognize the issues that should be addressed.

The guide includes lists of "Smart Choices" -- or things we think we did right; and also "Lessons Learned" -- or things we would differently the next time.

The Appendices at the end include practical lists for program organizers, including a suggested timelines and summary checklists for each stage of the project.

3. C\CEN's concept of NetCorps

In Angola and in Nova Scotia, C\CEN's main goal is "tech-knowledge transfer" --or training and capacity building amongst working people and community members so that they can identify opportunities or do their current work better because of improved access to Information & Communications Technology. An explicit aim both locally and in Angola has been developing partnerships and experience for long-term local economic development in Nova Scotia. This "outcome-oriented" focus in our projects separates the NetCorps concept from some other exchange and travel programs which focus as a main objective on creating a positive cultural and educational experience for program participants.

B. THE PROJECT TEAM

Projects of this nature depend highly on the experience and skills of the partners. The following is a list of each partner and the essential skills they brought to the project:

1. International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

financial backing

extensive experience in International Development

representative visited organizers early in project and offered experienced and useful advice

2. Industry Canada

financial backing

provided content for participants to take to Angola on Community Access computing and Community Networks in Canada

3. Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)

HRDC was critical to the project's success. Since funding was available only for project expenses but not wages, HRDC agreed to sponsor the "wages" of the two participants.

In the case of one participant, HRDC coordinated with the TAGS income-support program for ex-fisheries industry workers so that he would be allowed to continue receiving his income support while volunteering on the project. This creative approach was necessary because TAGS traditionally hasn't recognized on-the-job training experience of this type.

4. TAGS (The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy)

As mentioned above, the TAGS program demonstrated creative flexibility in sponsoring the project.

Eileen MacNeil, the Maritime Fishermen's Union representative to the program, was critical to the initial selection of the participants, because she was able to seek out and recommend resumes of TAGS clients who had received computer training and upgrading through the TAGS program.

5. Development Workshop (Luanda, Angola and Guelph, Ontario)

provided office space, hardware & software, living quarters and a driver (necessary in Luanda!)

DW is a highly respected and long-established (20 years) NGO in Angola. The Director, Allan Cain, is a Canadian who has been living in Angola for 14 years, and so has a great deal of credibility. The project would have been much more difficult working with an organization with any less experience and stature.

DW has demonstrated in the past that they can evacuate all personnel within 24 hours in the event that a war breaks out (which was not out of the question during the time of the project).

DW's sister office in Canada was essential to gaining information about the Angola office prior to departure, since communications with Angola were intermittent and difficult. We had one specific contact to go to at DW in Guelph, and this was very helpful.

6. Canada World Youth

Arranged for flights, got information on Visa Requirements, organized two pre-departure cultural briefings and one re-entry briefing.

CWY's experience with international travel and understanding the cultural experience of the participants was essential.

7. University College of Cape Breton (UCCB)

provided financial management

8. Geographic Information Systems Lab, UCCB

provided necessary upgrade training in GIS for one of the participants

In a technology transfer "exchange" such as NetCorps, it's critical to have partners with specialization in the technology itself.

9. CompuClone Computer Solutions, Inc.

Similarly, provided high-quality training seminar in UNIX which was tailored for this project specifically

10. C\ICEN

provided initial idea, contacts and management for the project

developed criteria, selected and arranged internships for the participants

provided the content base for the project as a whole

organized communication and quality control

The following C\ICEN core staff were critical to the project:

Director
Assistant Director
Administrative Assistant
Technology Support Coordinator

The following additional staff were hired specifically for this project:

Project Coordinator & Scribe (full-time pre-departure phase; part-time during)
Participant with experience with Networks and troubleshooting
Participant with experience in GIS

C. SMART CHOICES

1. Selection & Training

We deliberately selected participants who were older than first or second-year University students. Blair McInnis is in his mid-30s and had worked as a fish cutter before attending a Novel networking course paid for through a federal program designed to assist ex-fisheries workers. Glenn Graham was a recent University graduate with experience traveling and working in the military. In the words of Maribel Gonzales of Development Workshop's Ontario office;

"C\ICEN has done well by choosing more mature cooperantes. The environment in Angola is very difficult even for experienced development workers, the context and the tasks would seem almost bizarre to someone with lesser experience and maturity."

In this sense, the maturity to handle the work environment in Angola was as important as the technical skills to do the job.

With the goal of hiring mature participants, the hiring committee was made up of the Director of C\ICEN (with International development experience) and an expert in the field in which assistance was to be given. The personal recommendations of people who had worked with the applicants in income assistance programs was also invaluable.

Based on a hunch, the hiring group selected Blair in part because he is a backyard mechanic who likes to tinker with most machines. The hunch played out, and Blair's ability with hardware and repairs turned out to be an essential skill that someone with only "formal" training would not have had.

After hiring the participants based on fairly general criteria, we then assessed their existing skills more precisely. Simultaneously, we received detailed job descriptions from the host institution in Angola. By identifying where the gaps were, we were able to target the additional training which was necessary. Both Blair and Glenn attended an intensive UNIX workshop, and Glenn worked with the GIS Lab at the University on tasks designed to prepare him for the work in Angola.

It was extremely useful that our Director had met personally with the Director of Development Workshop when the initial request for assistance was made. Because of a personal connection, we had the relationship we needed to get travel, work and technical information from Development Workshop (Although we could have done a better needs assessment -- see below -- the expectations of the work in Angola were generally on target and information flowed between our organization and DW).

The pre-departure briefing and most travel arrangements went very smoothly. We credit the involvement of Canada World Youth (experienced in organizing international travel) as well as our decision to hire an past participant of a Canada World Youth program as project coordinator. Vaccinations, passports and visas were obtained on time despite tight deadlines and unanticipated complications.

2. Travel Experience in Angola

The participants were safe and did not get ill. The only theft involved a wallet that was momentarily left lying on a beach. This is a success and illustrates good planning since Angola is one of the most dangerous countries in the world. We credit the experience and stability of Development Workshop as an organization. DW arranged for a driver when Blair and Glenn needed transportation, arranged for safe accommodations, and briefed the pair on security issues.

Sending two participants was much better than sending one, especially in a country as difficult as Angola, where neither participant speaks the local language well. Burnout would have happened sooner if either had been on their own.

Because the participants had become friends with office staff back at C\NEN, we were able to communicate personal notes to family and hockey scores back to Angola (which pleased the whole office!) The little things make a big difference.

3. Work Experience in Angola

Despite extremely difficult work conditions, DW was pleased with the final outcome for their organization. One of the most important reasons for the success of the project was the flexibility of the participants. If they had insisted on pursuing the original job descriptions despite changes in staff and technical requirements, less would have been accomplished.

Despite the fact that an average of 1 in 5 e-mails "got through", C\NEN's remote technology support worked. This was an experimental aspect of the project. For an example of how the tech support was useful, Blair noted the time he had difficulty with a hardware/Linux conflict. He e-mailed the question to the Tech Support Desk at C\NEN, which then spent a day

researching the conflict on the Web and e-mailed a complete answer back. Blair would not have otherwise been able to access this information from Angola.

Three months was about the right length of time for the project. According to Blair and Glenn, one month would be much too short, because they had just got their sense of the task at hand. At three months, however, they were tired and ready (personally) to come home for a break. A longer trip would not necessarily have accomplished more. A better needs assessment and more advance communication could have meant they got more done in the time allotted, however.

4. Follow-up

Blair and Glenn both brought back numerous ideas for business opportunities and further collaborations. For example: C\CEN may act as a purchasing agent for DW's hardware and software; we may coordinate future expert visits for specific technical assistance contracts; we have actively pursued ideas for developing hardware and power supply devices specific to Angola's context (and possibly applicable to other developing countries' needs).

This again is the benefit of selecting mature participants who are interested in creating long-term employment when they come back. Blair continues to work with C\CEN, helping us to actively explore the opportunities he brought back. We both hope there will be a job in it for him.

We are glad we set aside a day for re-entry briefing and conversation between the participants, Canada World Youth staff and C\CEN staff. Much of the information in this Program Guide came from that conversation.

D. LESSONS LEARNED

1. Selection & Training

It was pointed out after the project that we should have had applicants undergo a medical examination before final selection. If there had been any problems, the project would have had to select and train different participants.

The Canada World Youth cultural briefings could have had an urban focus. Especially coming from Cape Breton, Blair and Glenn were quite taken aback by the city environment in Luanda.

The three-day UNIX course was essential, but it could have been more useful if it had been able to replicate the unpredictable work environment in Angola. Frequent power black-outs, surges, old machinery, were the cause of much of the work in Angola and the training in Canada wasn't able to simulate that situation.

Blair and Glenn both emphasized the need for a better needs assessment at Angola office. In retrospect, they said the only way this could have been done completely would be to send a representative from the organizing group to the site for two weeks. The staff at DW were pressed for time and perhaps didn't have the knowledge of the equipment they did own and what they needed...so communication from them would not be as relevant as an on-site visit. If a site visit is out of the question, then Blair and Glenn recommended asking DW for the broadest possible explanation of the result desired, and working backwards from there to the technical solution. Both found they had software in their kits based on what had been asked of them, while different software would have suited the actual needs better.

Other areas where preparation/training could have been better: cooking (!), more current news about Angola, and a formalized communication system worked out in advance (for

example, agree to number all correspondence so we know when communication is getting lost).

A pre-departure visit between the participants and the staff at the Guelph office would have been very useful. The participants worked closely with the Guelph staff, and a personal rapport would have helped. The initial plan to send the participants to Guelph on the way out of the country was abandoned due to budget constraints, but on reflection, we would find a way to include it.

2. Travel Experience in Angola

While Blair and Glenn felt secure at most times, there were a number of basic creature comforts that would have made the experience much more positive: a stereo and lots of batteries, a coffee pot, and more basic toiletries.

In some senses, the experience was too much business. Because it was unsafe for them to walk in the city on their own, they went with the appointed driver to work and back only. They would have liked to have a "social counterpart" in addition to a work counterpart. Perhaps a trusted acquaintance of the DW staff would agree to act as a greeter, a person to call to find out about city sights or events, to find out what certain foods are, or to invite the participants to dinner now and again.

Blair and Glenn wished they had been prepared for the entry into the country. The first thing the customs officer asked was "Do you have any money?". Being Canadian and used to traveling to the states where the right answer is "yes", that's what Blair and Glenn said. They were then taken into a back room where they were sure the customs agents would have taken their money had it not been Canadian.

3. Work Experience in Angola

More language training would have been useful. If the first language of the country is somewhat obscure, look for a second language which may be more common. Blair and Glenn suggested that a French speaker would have been able to get along fairly well in Angola despite because French is the second language of many of the Portuguese speakers. DW suggested a tape and book series if the participants are willing to learn on their own. Language lessons while in the country would be the most useful. These should be planned for and budgeted.

Many difficulties of the office environment had to do with work in a tropical, developing country environment. Power surges and blackouts, and diskettes which would mold if left out, were common problems. More advance communication with people used to doing technical work in this environment would have been useful.

Both participants wished they had had a clearly identified counterpart. They lost some productive work time because the DW staff was pressed for time to give Blair and Glenn clear direction.

Some of the work that Blair and Glenn did could have been done by "techies" with much less experience and skill. They offered basic training to DW staff on how to use the software and equipment they had, because the staff tended to be development professionals without much technical experience. A strategy for the future might be to plan for this (and hence, a candidate with less experience may be able to participate) or to specify the goals of the main task very clearly so that it would be apparent if the participants were getting "off-track"

because of spending time on general office tech support.

The GIS project was severely hampered by national security regulations around photographs and maps. This was not anticipated.

The main technical blockages were: 1) power outages, 2) wrong software for the job (a better needs assessment would have helped with this) or 3) the software wouldn't run on the existing hardware (outdated equipment a problem). That said, the networking project went quite smoothly.

There may be technologies available which would work extremely well for the office in Angola but which the staff there are not aware of. A future project would involve researching these opportunities before traveling. For instance, a DirecPC satellite Internet connection may be possible currently, cellular modems may be more practical than land lines, etc.

It's interesting to note the type of placement that DW was. Because it is a locally based NGO, this gives DW a great deal of credibility, which is an asset. Because it is focused locally and doesn't have an overabundance of funding, its office is more closely in line with local conditions (power, heat, etc.) than other organizations which were working in the area. There was a Norwegian aid group (NPA) which did have access to hardware, software, consistent power supplies, and many of the "first world" benefits that DW didn't. Sometimes Blair and Glenn were able to use resources at NPA, and sometimes NPA called on their services as technicians. Coming out of this are two questions: 1) is DW the "right" type of placement for this project? (we have concluded that it was, precisely because the office had a real need for assistance); and 2) would other aid groups with more funds be willing to pay for the services of NetCorps technicians on an occasional basis?

4. Follow-up

It would have been a good idea to budget for pay for the two participants during the week or two after returning to Canada. This would have allowed us to ask for more detailed reports, and to guarantee participation in discussions around future opportunities (We lucked out that Blair has been willing to volunteer!)

E. WORKING DOCUMENTS

1. Suggested Timeline

One-year project

Month One - Two

establish relationship with host site through e-mail or telephone

develop proposal

establish funding and partnership agreements

Month Three

Send "needs assessment" professional to host site for two weeks. Develop personal rapport, create detailed inventory of existing equipment and expectations of new purchases. Establish the goals of the organization with regard to the technology.

Month Four

Develop job description and begin to seek candidates through informal networks.

Hire a Project Coordinator in the country which will send the participants.

Research visa, passport, health and insurance requirements.

Month Five

Select short-list of participants.

Require short-listed participants to undergo a health (and perhaps technical) exam.

Project Coordinator should research sources of best possible current information about the country and encourage the participants to research on their own.

Begin language learning now, especially if it is to be done with tapes and books. Organize a schedule even for independent work and have a clear mechanism for reporting on progress.

Apply for passports and visas as a first priorities. Do all steps of this process personally with the participants.

Organize insurance at this point. Work with the host country organization to determine what kind of insurance they order for their staff. Compass International and Telfer International are two companies suggested to us as specializing in international travel. Insurance should include health, long term disability, accidental death and dismemberment and extension of coverage (for up to three months in Canada while awaiting reinstatement to provincial health insurance plan), emergency evacuation (if relevant), and liability.

Month 6

Begin regular technical training program. It should be clear what (if anything) the participant should be paid during this period, and what the work expectations are. A contract should be developed before training begins with the host institution.

Work in constant communication with the overseas placement site. Identify and update lists of areas in which training is necessary. Develop "toolkit" shopping list in conjunction with host site and update constantly.

If equipment is to be brought with the participants, ship it now. (Our equipment arrived after the participants left -- three 1/2 months in transit!)

Month 7

First cultural briefing (two days). In our case this was combined with vaccinations

Establish agreed-upon communication plan and practice it with an identified counterpart at the host country office.

Month 8

Final cultural briefing.

Allow participants a break to be with family before departure.

Months 9-11

Participants in work environment.

Look for regular communication and number communication so you know when to chase something down.

If the Project Coordinator's contract has ended, make sure you designate a staff person at the Canada-side operation who will be in direct and constant contact with the participants.

Month Twelve

Debriefing, write evaluation, pursue further developments. Money should be allocated for these tasks.

2. Checklist for participants' preparation

by Blair McInnis

This is an information checklist that can be used for overseas travel to a third world country. The things contained here pertain to Luanda, Angola but hopefully it will be of some use for people traveling to other third world countries.

The first thing I would strongly suggest is for anyone traveling to another country is to do as much of their own research as possible. This along with a coordinator should give a good estimation of what should be asked of the host. Also make sure you ask questions and if you do not get an answer or do not like the answer you get ask the question again; this is no time to be shy. Another thing is language. It is more important than you may think, especially if like myself you do not have a counterpart to help you in such matters as grocery shopping and other day to day things you may take for granted. Also knowing how to prepare your meals will help with the adjustment of living in a foreign country.

Things to take:

Again this can be different for each situation but asking some questions of the host may be helpful. Questions as to the prices of simple things can be a real barometer to the cost of living in each area. I would however suggest taking enough toothpaste, soap, shampoo, and any other day to day essentials that may not be available where you may be going. It may be a good idea to take clothing that you do not want to bring home as things can get stolen or lost. Also keeping clothes clean can be almost impossible in third world environment. In tropical zones jeans are too heavy and take too long to dry when they are washed. Light clothing but not necessarily white.