



# CUSO

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## AN OUTLINE OF LINKAGE PROGRAM ELEMENTS AND ISSUES

### ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

1. Based on long-term reciprocal relationships - learning and giving on both sides.
2. Between community groups and/or organizations and not just individuals.
3. Some congruence of experience, goals and objectives between groups.
4. Both groups develop and work toward a shared analytical framework of the structural condition that sustain underdevelopment.
5. The linkage includes exchange of human and material resources that contributes to the conscientization process.
6. CUSO does not "own" or "control" the results but plays an important role in facilitating the linkage. Our involvement will range from central or intermediary function at the outset to one of peripheral or remote beneficiary as the process of linkage unfolds.
7. New forms of international communication between groups must emerge over the long run so that they own the means of direct, regular contact.
8. For the purposes of evaluation it is necessary that linkages be documented from the initial ideas, organizing and objective-setting, through implementation and subsequent development.
9. Movement towards structural social and economic change is an important part of a linkage process.

### CUSO AS A FACILITATOR

- CUSO's Field presence overseas provides a base to identify overseas project/programs for linkage; these programs are community-based with practical socio-economic self-help goals, including the empowerment of community organizations of the poorest sectors of society;

- CUSO has experience in the recruitment, selection and orientation of Canadians for both short and long-term overseas job placements;

- CUSO has a cross-Canada network of offices and staff, many of whom have developed effective community based development education programming, working with local Canadian professional and NGO groups in recruitment, education and fund-raising;

- Parts of this Canadian network have developed experience with linkage programs over the past ten years (farmers exchanges with the Caribbean, tours/exchange programs with Nicaragua); more recently there has been increased experience with innovative educational methodologies and building long term relationships with sectoral organizations.

### LESSONS FROM PREVIOUS LINKAGE PROGRAMS

Linkage work is a long-term process, involving careful planning and organization both here in Canada and overseas; it's a style of work that evolves over time, incorporating and building upon interest and experience in particular organizational relationships as they develop.

- Effective co-operation through linkage programming will be based on the evolution of trust relationships between the participants and their organizations, as well as a mutual understanding of the constraints (both developmental and organizational) overseas and in Canada.

- A effective linkage program will build upon the institutional experience which results over time; the end results cannot be predicted in advance; the process must have sufficient flexibility to take advantage of programming opportunities and relationships as they arise.

- Selection of participants should come from within a sponsoring organization or community, recommended by a community or co-worker.

- Those selected must have a clear long term commitment to return to their community/organization to bring back the experience overseas, either through further recruitment, fund-raising, education of co-workers, or through a reciprocal visit from Third World partners.

- There should be some initial base of interest/curiosity, both overseas and in Canada, in a specific linkage (whether it be professional development, educational/solidarity work, or material support) out of which an initial commitment is made.
- The facilitation of a linkage through CUSO must be careful not to impose CUSO's own organizational commitments (i.e. ownership of the process) on participants, while at the same time providing some guidance based on our overseas programming and previous linkage work.
- A long-term orientation process is required to set overall and personal objectives, to build group rapport and trust, to understand the social and political context of the linkage relationship.
- A orientation process should ideally involve both partners in the linkage; in the past, there has been little attention to the orientation of Third World participants. Ultimately reciprocity of benefits should be incorporated into the process through joint orientation that set the overall goals of the linkage among the participants and their counter-part institutions.