

A BRIEF HISTORY OF VILLAGE EARTH: THE CONSORTIUM FOR SUSTAINABLE VILLAGE-BASED DEVELOPMENT

The Preparation.

The Conference. From September 28 – October 2 , 1993, an international conference of approximately 250 delegates from 40 different countries assembled at Fort Collins to discuss and debate issues relative to Sustainable Village-Based Development. The majority of those in attendance were from developing nations, and most of those individuals represented non-governmental organizations with a direct link to rural villages. More than 200 papers were submitted and formed five volumes of Proceedings. It was agreed by conference participants to explore the launch of several pilot projects, establish a newsletter to be sent to all conference participants and other interested parties, and to find ways to make the proceedings generally available to attendees and the interested public. And it was strongly recommended to establish CSVBD Chapters to promote sustainable village-based development world wide.

The Membership. All conference participants were to be members up to the year 2000. More than 150 new persons have become members in addition to the 250 attending the conference.

The Organization. Village Earth: CSVBD is a 501 (c) (3) not for profit organization created for the purpose of empowering villages on all continents to overcome the debilitating poverty that assaults two out of every three people across the world.

The Newsletter. An average of two newsletters have been produced each year since the Conference. The name of the newsletter has slightly changed and is now called “The Village Earth Connection.” Village Earth was adopted in 1998 by the Board of Directors as a name more easily remembered. Formally, the full name is: Village Earth: The Consortium for Sustainable Village Based Development (CSVBD). The newsletter can also be accessed through visiting our web site at <http://www.VillageEarth.org>

The Projects. Over the past six years the staff of VE has developed the Village Earth Model for Sustainable Village-Based Development. It is a 24 page document that describes the framework and process needed for sustainable village development. It has taken the learnings of the past 50 years and integrated them into a systemic, wholistic approach. The Village Earth Model can be acquire through visiting our web site mentioned above.

The International Service Center (ISC) of the Consortium is based in Ft. Collins, Colorado, and has both contributed to and been enriched by its close but autonomous relationship with Colorado State University. More than 20 students have participated in internships that have earned them up to three credit hours over the past four years. Several recent graduates are now preparing to take two year internships with organizations working in Nepal, India and Indonesia. The ISC supports Village Earth projects through an extensive program of training, regular consultations, a monitoring

and evaluation program for all Village Earth projects, and building an effective networking for accessing resources. The Consortium would like, over the next five years to establish village development projects (each serving a population of about 50,000), in five to seven different geo-social environments. Following are the countries where Village Earth is working in a more or less intensive way.

INDIA. On June 26, 1996 a memorandum of understanding between Village Earth: The Consortium for Sustainable Village-Based Development (CSVBD) and the Helpo Foundation in Pune, Maharashtra State, India was signed between the two parties in which the outlines of a project support relationship were stated. In March of 1997 a four week course on Participatory Practices for Sustainable Development was held for all Helpo staff members and NGO leaders both in the Pune area and other states. The University of Pune is presently working with us in conducting a baseline survey of 602 family units in the service area of 50,000. They will collect the data beginning in January, 2000, enter the data, write reports and make available the database and significant information for all interested parties. A similar relationship will be sought between future project sites and nearby universities. This provides a clear benefit to university researchers who wish to do time series data studies, documentation of innovations and their results over time, engagements of all interested university departments in rural development issues, etc. We are working presently on obtaining funding for a full scale project.

NGO leaders in West Bengal have requested that a Village Earth:CSVBD Chapter be established at the District level in which many NGOs wish to work together toward a viable rural development project using the Village Earth Framework. Many other NGOs in India have requested a working relationship with Village Earth. There will be a mid-year Village Earth training event in West Bengal that will also include NGO leaders from Orissa and Bihar States—two of the poorest areas in India.

INDONESIA. In Fall of 1995, the Director of Private Universities visited Colorado State University and met extensively with Dr. Albertson and Dr. Shinn. He was desirous of obtaining assistance with the involvement of private universities in his oversight in effective rural development practice and implementation. Fifteen professors and university administrators attended the training course offered by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD, an Institute within the Civil Engineering Department) called “Participatory Practices for Sustainable Development.” Over the years short courses held in Indonesia for more than 100 private and some public universities. A consensus developed to build a sustainable village based development program in which universities would have both a rural and an urban project of approximately forty to fifty thousand persons to access needed resources. In the year 2000, it is anticipated that a number of courses will be held to train indigenous university personnel through the IISD in sustainable village-based development.

In a visit held in February – March, 1999, Trisakti University, the largest of the private universities in Indonesia, asked Village Earth to assist it in developing a Ph.D. Program in Sustainable Village (both urban and rural) Based Development. During February of

2000 Dr. Albertson, Dr. Shinn and Mrs. Shinn will participate in conducting two courses in Jakarta at Trisakti University as a part of the first year of the Ph.D. program.

In all projects, Village Earth:CSVBD works to establish a working relation between the project site and one or more nearby universities. This is especially needed to establish and maintain a credible Monitoring and Evaluation program.

AFRICA. Persons from South Africa and Nigeria have attended the Participation Course offered at CSU by the IISD. There have been two contingents from Nigeria, who have asked Village Earth:CSVBD to work with the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in developing a nationwide program of integrated rural development. This March, personnel from Village Earth will spend one week at the invitation of the Nigerian Government in developing an initial program of action, appropriate to the situation.

NEPAL. The Mountain Resources Management Group (MRMG), under the leadership of its Executive Director, Mr. Duman Thapa, has entered into a memorandum of understanding with Village Earth to act as its technical support group to provide training, consultation, monitoring and evaluation assistance, and networking resources. At present we are assisting the MRMG with three project sites: Arghakanchi, a high mountain network of 100 villages with a population of approximately 50,000. An irrigation system is being installed with extensive village participation, planning and physical labor. The water has not only provided drinking water but has made possible the production of vegetables in the off-season, bringing in over two million rupees to participating villagers. Many of the men are now able to stay at home rather than go to the cities to find whatever job they can. This project is supported by Danida, the Danish aid program agency.

The Rajapur Project is located on the border with India, and is an Island of approximately 60,000 people in the Terrai (relatively flat lands) area of Nepal. This project began as a water project, and significant physical structures have been installed to manage and control extensive water resources. The government is turning over the management of most government controlled irrigation structures to local and intermediate level water user associations. And the MRMG has been designated the trainer and facilitator of this process specifically for the Rajapur area, with the support of the Ford Foundation and government cooperation. The MRMG has decided that it is necessary to have a full interdisciplinary approach to the area in order to accomplish the irrigation mandate. Without dealing with agricultural, health and other concerns, water user organizations will be less effective, unable to respond to priority needs identified by villages. The Ford Foundation has said that it will fund the MRMG to establish a permanent irrigation management research and training institution to serve the country as a whole in both mountain and terrai (plain) environments. Village Earth has been asked to assist in this process.

Finally, the World Bank has asked the MRMG to write a proposal to train NGOs in 28 Nepal Districts in proper water management measures that have to do with system

operation, maintenance, strengthening WUA organizations at several operational levels, etc. Village Earth has been asked to assist in framing this proposal, and as is appropriate, call on expertise from CSU to provide technical resources in a responsive and timely manner.

OTHER COUNTRIES. The YADC (Youth Approach to Development Cooperation) in Bangladesh has sought to send a contingent of people for training at CSU, but visa problems have intervened. They are hopeful of establishing a Village Earth Project as soon as they can train. The YADC is an association of small and intermediate level business owners and leaders who have a strong interest in rural development.

Haiti has also exhibited strong interest in training for development of the rural sector. However, they have been inhibited from participating due to visa problems. Ivory Coast and Ghana NGOs are planning to attend the next PPSD course, April 3-14, 2000 at CSU. These courses are held through the IISD which is in the CE Department.

The Appropriate Technology Library. The Appropriate Technology Library is one of the divisions of Village Earth:CSVBD. The purpose of the ATL is to make accessible to rural areas of the world technologies that are needed for local individual, family and community development. The library was originally created by Volunteers in Asia, located at Stanford University. It contained 1050 volumes in a number of technical areas. As their mission changed they sought an organization that was more focused on the rural sector, and asked if it would fit into the organizational mission of CSVBD.

The old library was exclusively available only in microfiche . It was imperative to produce it in CD-Rom. However, the cost was \$30,000 to produce this new version of the library. A company was located that would work with our financial limitations and the new version is now in hand, and orders are being taken and distributed.

A new revised edition of the library is now being planned. 20 new volumes will be identified for each of the main areas outlined in the Table of Contents of the Appropriate Technology Sourcebook. CSU University professors in each of these areas are being identified to assist in the final selection process.

The Village Earth Model. In September, 1999, a document--in preparation over the last five years--describing the vision and methods for rural transformation was completed by Village Earth staff (and is attached). It describes the objectives, fundamental principles and structure for sustainable village-based development. Finally, it clarifies the five phases of SVBD and twenty major programs that take a Resource Access Unit of approximately 50,000 people from poverty, to no longer being in poverty at the conclusion of the five year program of action. The staff is in the process of building program implementation guides for each of these 20 programs so that the process can be more easily replicated in other locations across the world. Ten of these program guides should be completed within the next twelve months. It is to be noted that these guides

will need to be constantly updated as feedback from the field informs new and innovative suggestions for improvement.

The International Service Center. The International Service Center (ISC) of Village Earth is located in Fort Collins, Box 797, Colorado, 80522. The ISC is designed to support the Village Earth program of sustainable village-based development across the world. Presently, the strategy is to establish within five years 5 major demonstrations in the Sub-Continent, Africa, Southeast Asia, Central America and the Caribbean, and South America. Two of five locations are already initiated.

There are four major functions of the ISC: Training, consultation, monitoring and evaluation and networking assistance. Training in the structure and processes of sustainable village-based development will take place within countries where Village Earth projects are located. When training is done at CSU, it is done by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD): CSU. At present, two to three courses a year are held at CSU. A rounded curriculum of SVBD courses will be in place within the next 18 months to serve both international and national development efforts. When courses are held outside the university, they will be under the rubric of field operations and supervised and administered by Village Earth.

Every six months, at the minimum, staff from VE will visit the project sites. They will review with the NGOs, who are responsible for facilitating project development, their plan of action for the past six months, strengths and weakness, new directions called for, and finally a plan of action for the next six months. If there are special technical needs, the ISC will seek to recruit qualified expertise to work with NGO staff members and local teams of professionals trained in the specific field under investigation.

Monitoring and Evaluation is required at every project site. In India this has been established through active involvement by Pune University staff and graduate students. It is planned that every VE project be functionally related to the university and its varied pools of expertise.

Perhaps one of the most important functions of the ISC is to insure that the local NGO build teams with expertise in key development sectors that can interact with both the public and private sectors to secure needed resources. In the Pune project both private and public sectors are being approached to work with specific project development needs such as watershed rehabilitation and water use, and agricultural production and marketing.

The Board of Directors. The Board of Directors of Village Earth: The Consortium for Sustainable Village-Based Development (CSVBD) meets annually, usually in the Summer or Fall. The President is Dr. Maurice Albertson; the Vice-President is Dr. Omer Kelly of Colorado Springs; the Executive Director is Dr. Edwin Shinn. The organization is legally registered as a 501 (C) (3) organization with tax exempt status. The Employer Identification Number is 84-1243878.

The Staff. There are two employees, an Administrative Assistant who is three quarters time and an Appropriate Technology Manager who is half time. There are presently four interns, all related to the university, and five volunteers who spend time each week on specific task assignments.

Email and the World Wide Web. The email address is: csvbd@VillageEarth.org The Web site is: <http://www.VillageEarth.org>