

Integral Research Projects

Case Studies on an Integral Approach to International Development

Carried out by: Drishti-Centre for Integral Action 2005-2006

Lead researcher: Gail Hochachka

Funded by: Canada's International Development Research Center (IDRC)

Summary:

An Integral Research project on drawing on various lines of inquiry from six zones, to explore how the interior and exterior dimensions of change are engaged by international development organizations. Specifically, the central research question was: *How is interiority integrated into international development approaches?* With a secondary question: *To what extent and how was Integral Theory used in this regard?*

This project engaged methodologies from six zones of IMP to disclose phenomena relating to the topic of study. These zones were engaged as dynamic lines of inquiry. An *experiential inquiry* (zone 1) involving reflection, meditation, and journaling; *developmental inquiry* (zone 2) involving various "folk" methods of gauging developmental altitude in various lines (both in one's self, other individuals, and in social center of gravity of the participating organizations); an *interpretive inquiry* (zone 3) involving key informant interviews and focus groups; an *ethnomethodological inquiry* (zone 4) involving participant-observation methodology, and an *empirical inquiry* and *systems inquiry* (zones 6 and 8 respectively) involving various objective methods of analyzing statistics and assessing behaviors and performance that were relevant to the issues addressed by the participating organization, as well as the systems analysis of the context in which the organizations were situated.

The six participating development organizations include four civil society organizations in Peru, El Salvador, and Ethiopia, one larger US-based non-governmental organization (NGO) working in India, and also a UNDP leadership program that has field experience in over 40 countries (brief overviews of these organizations is provided below). Some are integrally informed, others have a more intuitive approach to integration. This diversity and depth—from the grassroots to the international, from integrative to intuitively integral to integrally informed—helped this research to more comprehensively understand the ways that development organizations are integrating interiority in the overall whole of development practice. Among the research results, this project offers insight into current and potential integral applications in the field of international development.

Full case studies on each participating organization can be found at www.drishti.ca/resources.htm; and an academic article reporting the methodology and synthesizing findings is published in *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*, vol.3, no.2, pp. 58-108.

Developing Capacity and Community Well-being: Action Research on an Integral Capacity Development Approach in the Mapacho River Watershed, Peru

Carried out by: Drishti-Centre for Integral Action

Lead researchers: Gail Hochachka and Sandra Thomson

Partner organizations: Amazon Conservation Association (ACCA) and One Sky-Canadian Institute for Sustainable Living

Funded by: Canada's International Development Research Center (IDRC)

Summary:

This research project inquires into what process-framework, including criteria and indicators, should be used to assess the effectiveness of integral capacity development. This type of research-based assessment is useful and necessary to anchor claims of effectiveness with actual quantitative and qualitative data. Drishti-Centre for Integral Action is partnering with a Canadian organization, One Sky, and a Peruvian organization, *Asociación para la Conservación de la Cuenca Amazonica* (Amazon Conservation Association, or ACCA). ACCA and One Sky are currently working with an integral capacity building approach to improve effectiveness in Amazon rainforest conservation.

Ultimately, the research findings will serve both ACCA and One Sky, as well as other organizations working in the field of sustainable development, particularly who are engaging a more comprehensive, holistic, or (in this case) integral approach to capacity building—that is an approach that seeks to develop both soft skills as well as hard skills in at least four domains of change (personal, cultural, behavioral, and systemic). The framework for assessment, monitoring and evaluation should be able to adequately capture the nuanced changes in all domains of such an initiative. The Drishti research team sees that without adequate assessment tools in place, little can be rigorously known about the effectiveness of the approach being taken by these partner organizations working on Amazon rainforest conservation in Peru. Both the selection of criteria and indicators as well as the methodologies used to assess and evaluate these, need to be reflective of both the soft and hard capacities sought in this approach. In other words, the capacity development that engages interior capacities or aptitudes in individuals and organizations requires assessment methodologies that somehow capture and measure those interior aspects. Similarly, the capacity development that fosters exterior changes such as new practical skills and technical know-how requires assessment methodologies that capture and reflect those exterior aspects. This research is developing an integral M&E framework that can help to more adequately identify criteria and indicators and methodologies for assessing changes in this integral capacity building project.

The Drishti research team finds the project is well served by the grounded application of Action Research and the comprehensive range of tools provided by Integral Research. Action Research sources directly from what is most relevant in this Peruvian context and feeds research findings back into practice in ways that make this research immediately of service in the field. Integral Research assists the researchers in more fully comprehending the research topic itself, as well as piloting and modeling the very methodologies that can be utilized in the integral M&E framework. Both research approaches employ 1st-person, 2nd-person, and 3rd-person research methods, and as a whole, the project involves six zones of Integral Methodological Pluralism.

This project is currently underway in Cusco, Peru in relation to conservation work in the surrounding cloud forest and rainforest ecosystems. An additional outcome sought in this project, or perhaps in a future project, is a toolkit that could be used by other social change organizations, particularly those who work with an integral approach. Updates and field-notes will be posted periodically on the Integral Research website or the Drishti blog:

<http://drishti.ca/connect/blog.htm>