

Paraguay

Cooperative Development Program (CDP)



The USAID-funded Cooperative Development Program (CDP) was a five-year initiative to increase overseas farmers' and entrepreneurs' incomes through participation in the global economy.

Under CDP I, implemented from 2002 to 2010, ACDI/VOCA provided technical assistance and fostered local, national and international partnerships to help a wide variety of cooperatives add value and become sustainable in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay and Russia.

The new phase of the program will be implemented from 2010 to 2015 primarily in Ethiopia, Kenya, Paraguay and Tanzania. CDP II will build upon the successes and lessons from the prior program while taking a more strategic and in-depth approach to cooperative development.

Program Overview

CDP/Paraguay enhanced agricultural cooperative and producer association development in the eastern half of the country. CDP I targeted agribusinesses to benefit the larger economy and many of Paraguay's poorest, most of whom are involved in agriculturally based enterprises. ACDI/VOCA worked with institutions to improve governance, management and financial systems. CDP I also stressed the importance of developing market-driven member services. By providing training and other consultative services in management, strategic planning, sound business practices, internal controls, production, and marketing, cooperatives and associations empowered smallholder farmers and small-scale entrepreneurs to increase the capacity of their enterprises and generate more income.

The objectives of CDP/Paraguay were met through short-term technical assistance to Paraguayan cooperatives. ACDI/VOCA, working with second-tier cooperative organizations and local governments, identified small to medium-sized cooperatives and associations with promising business models but lacking technical, operational or organizational knowledge to be fully successful. Working with each cooperative, CDP/Paraguay helped develop a technical assistance program and facilitated the arrival of volunteer consultants. These consultants are highly quali-



Project Profile

fied professionals who volunteer their time to help the organizations address their needs. After familiarizing themselves with the cooperatives thoroughly, the consultants made recommendations and worked with the organizations' directors, managers, members and employees to develop a work plan to move the cooperative in the direction it seeks.

Results

Over 40 volunteer assignments benefitted over 61,000 Paraguayan cooperative and association members. Organizations received assistance in operational and financial management, business plan development, cooperative education for new cooperatives and/or members, improved beef production, the commercial development of livestock feed, animal nutrition, banana production and post-harvest handling.

In 2006 ACIDI/VOCA established agreements with two second-tier cooperative organizations, Credicoop and Cepacoop, to work in identifying member cooperatives and associations in the eastern region of Paraguay. In March 2008, based on the success of these agreements and the project's positive impact on the cooperative community, ACIDI/VOCA signed an agreement with the Federation of Producer Cooperatives (FECOPROD) to extend assistance even further.

Along with short-term technical assistance, CDP/Paraguay focused on capacity building by providing opportunities for cooperative organizations in Paraguay, Bolivia, Brazil and Colombia to come together to share lessons learned, seek solutions to current challenges and build relationships among cooperative organizations in Latin America.

In 2006 ACIDI/VOCA sent Paraguayan cooperative directors to participate in a regional seminar on "change management" held in Bogotá, Colombia. This seminar gave the directors opportunities to share their experiences and hear about different strategies adopted by other cooperatives to overcome internal and external issues affecting operations.

Building off the conference, CDP/Paraguay played host to the 2008 Worldwide CDP Modernizing Business Culture within Agricultural Cooperatives Conference. This conference hosted representatives from Paraguayan, Bolivian and Colombian cooperatives; second-tier cooperative organizations; a local university; USAID; the secretary of agriculture and livestock of Paraguay; the University of Arizona; and ACIDI/VOCA. The conference focused on bringing cooperatives together to share ideas on how to ensure that organizations stay true to their social missions while still maintaining a business-oriented approach to their operations.