INTRODUCTION

The Institute for International Cooperation and Development, Michigan is a nonprofit research organization conducting Participatory Action Research (PAR). For the reader new to our organization’s goals and missions we quote from previous reports:

IICD is an organization that as one of its activities prepares mostly young people to work as development instructors in overseas development projects in poor nations in Africa and communities in Brazil. The mission of IICD is to inspire and empower ordinary people to take action against world wide poverty and to cultivate social change toward a sustainable future. IICD does so through the Development Instructor Program. In order to strengthen the program and to develop solutions to global issues, IICD carries out research in relation to and integrated into the Development Instructor Program.

The educational development research of IICD is integrated into the 18 months Development Instructor Program. We conduct PAR to evaluate the results and effects of the program as a whole, as well as of each period and some particular elements of the training. In 2015 in particular we focused our research in (1) the betterment of the community life experience during the national periods of the program; (2) the impact of the overseas development work, and (3) the evaluation of the personal development of the participants.

Why Participatory Action Research?

IICD’s mission is inspired by the guidelines of sustainable development presented in the 1987 report of the United Nations’ World Commission on Environment and Development, where it is stated that:

Believing that sustainable development, which implies meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, should become a central guiding principle of the United Nations, governments and private institutions, organizations and enterprises.
IICD embraces such ideas and works to develop the present with the goal of creating sustainable solutions for future generations to live in a better world. Through years of developing tools and programs, we at IICD have come to realize that only through systematic and scientific inquiry methods we can reach far and ground our work as an international organization. With that background we have embraced Participatory Action Research as the best tool and guide to conduct research and to be in the forefront with other organizations guiding the sustainable development goals.

We understand PAR as defined by Baum, MacDougall and Smith, in their article *Participatory Action Research*. According to them,

PAR seeks to understand and improve the world by changing it. At its heart is collective, self-reflective inquiry that researchers and participants undertake, so they can understand and improve upon the practices in which they participate and the situations in which they find themselves. The reflective process is directly linked to action, influenced by understanding of history, culture, and local context and embedded in social relationships. The process of PAR should be empowering and lead to people having increased control over their lives (p 854–857).

Participatory Action Research has proven to be the most fitted methodology for IICD due to its scope as a collective tool towards creating change and its flexibility. We have identified that the nature of our work at IICD is nonuniform, meaning that it is widely based on factors that are constantly changing and that are heterogeneous to begin with; for that reason PAR becomes a very useful method. As noted by Alice McIntyre in *Participatory Action Research*,

The fact that PAR is context specific means that practitioners draw on a variety of quantitative, qualitative, and creative-based methods to engage participants in the construction of knowledge—for example, surveys, interviews, focus groups, mapping, dramatization, movement, theater, symbolic art, and photo voice. Owing to the diversity of the methods used, there is also a diversity of analytical methods utilized by researchers and participants to analyze research data (p 49).

It is exactly that diversity that makes PAR the best methodology for developing the work of IICD.

As this report exemplifies, the approach of PAR to solve problems, answer questions and create change is based on the understanding that ordinary people need tools and a methodology that puts together theory and practice, while also placing the responsibility of the processes in the
hands of the collective formed by the participants of the research project. In the case of IICD our research project is twofold; in one hand we conduct research (with the development instructors and staff being the participants of the research); and in the other hand we conduct research with the people we work with at the development projects abroad. This parallel research has allowed us to develop our understanding of the method further and to improve our implementation.

**Educational Research 2015**

In 2015 we decided to pursue the same hypothesis as in previous years, in order to strengthen the foundation of our research. We believe that it is highly appropriate to pursue this hypothesis over several years due to the constant changes in the world around us and thus also in the dynamics between the people involved with our research. Our hypothesis states that

*It is possible, by a training program that includes extensive international and national practice to transform the participants, in essence making them better and more capable people while at the same time improving the world we live in.*

As mentioned before, during 2015 we focused our research in three different areas:

- PAR cycles at IICD with the purpose of improving the community life and the program; and for the development instructors (DI) to learn how to use PAR as a methodology for directing projects and actions towards social change.
- PAR cycles applied by the DIs at the projects in Africa in order to improve the capacity of the DIs and the group of Poor they work with.
- PAR project to evaluate the personal development of the DIs.

This approach suited very well the character of the organization during 2015 and it proven to be a useful way of transmitting the knowledge about PAR to the participants of IICD’s programs. Through the different PAR cycles all participants were able to experiment and collaborate, which showed to be an excellent measure for making PAR a living part of their training as development instructors.

The process of writing the present report is an example of how beneficial PAR can be for creating knowledge and change. The method followed the simple guidelines of directing a PAR cycle. First the participant of the research, in this case all DIs and staff of IICD, reviewed the
need of writing a report. Second, we reflected and investigated how-tos. We continue by developing a plan; and we ended with the implementation and reflection. The collective aspect of this process will be felt by the reader through the sections of this report, which has been written by the different research groups formed by IICD’s participants and staff after the initial reviewing stage of the PAR cycle.

PAR cycles

During a PAR cycle, participants first collect and analyze data to determine what actions should follow; second, they design and carry out the actions; and finally they reflect on the action, researching it further as the iterative reflective cycle perpetuates data collection, reflection, and action.

Therefore, a PAR cycle consists of the ongoing process of collecting and analyzing data to carry out actions that lead to new collection and analysis of data, that furthermore leads to actions in a permanent cycle reaching ever higher levels.

As McIntyre noticed with the image presented below, “this process of questioning, reflecting, dialoguing, and decision making resist linearity. Instead, PAR is a recursive process that involves a spiral of adaptable steps” (p 6-7).
We understand a PAR cycle as containing three steps: 1) focusing on research to decide actions fit for the purpose; 2) paying careful attention to power relationships, advocating for power to be deliberately shared between the researcher and the researched; and 3) advocating for not removing data and information from their contexts, meaning that those being researched are actively involved in the research process.

**RESEARCH**

I. PAR cycles at IICD with the purpose of improving the community life and the program; and for the development instructors (DI) to learn how to use PAR as a methodology for directing projects and actions towards social change.

Examples of PAR cycles conducted during 2015:
- Deciding whether to have sugar in our food policy.
- Deciding how to develop better evening meals.
- Organizing fundraising and outreach actions.
- Deciding to become a local 350.org group.
- Developing actions to promote the programs and get more people involved.
- Evaluating the team’s development through group meetings.
- Improving morning courses starting with feedback from the Common Meeting.
- Having a library at the school.
- Evaluating the rate of drop outs.
- Taking a stand on supporting the one participant in the October team to build a new TRIO to go to the project.

Here we describe some of these examples as evidence of how using PAR has improved our community life, the program and the understanding of PAR throughout the IICD participants and staff.
Example 1: Deciding whether to have sugar in our food policy

**Problem:** Excessive intake of glucose due to high process honey.

**Data collection:** Comments from the common meeting, teachers’ research presented in morning courses, discussions in the teachers council.

**Data analysis:** Teachers council meetings and common meeting.

**Actions taken:** Diversification of glucose sources, morning courses developed, common meeting and teachers meeting follow up on results in order to get a permanent decision/solution.

The teachers council identified that the honey used at the institute was as bad as using white sugar and much more expensive. One teacher did research and presented the documented case on the impact of sugar in the body, the environmental impact of highly processed honey production and the alternatives available. The point was then brought to a common meeting, where we discussed how to go about it.

The common meeting, formed by staff and DIs, agreed that more information on alternatives and impact was needed. So it was agreed to have a series of morning courses to learn more about sugar and alternatives to it, such as stevia, coconut sugar, maple syrup, and more. After some courses explaining the impact of sugar on human health and the processes of commercial honey production, the common meeting discussed the subject again and agreed to experiment for one month having raw sugar for tea, coffee and cakes, and using processed honey only for granola; while researching sources to find affordable organic local honey. An additional observation was the agreement on using 50% less honey and oil to prepare granola.

After one month, the common meeting evaluated and agreed that this was a good solution for now, but that our long term goal should be to produce organic honey. Other important note around the ongoing process of analyzing the impact of sugar included two questions that sparked the continuation of this PAR cycle: Is IICD reducing sugar intake by including the mentioned changes? Are individual preferences changing from sugar to honey as a general sweetener?

Example 2: Organizing fundraising and outreach actions

**Problem:** May Team not reaching their fundraising goals.

**Data collection:** May team, common meeting.

**Data analyzing:** May team, common meeting.
**Actions taken:** Individual evaluations, diversification of fundraising methods, better time management, collective efforts to encourage each other, solving personal differences.

The four participants in the May team 2015 faced many challenges in reaching their fundraising goal, mainly because of personal conflicts that did not allow them to organize well. The issue was addressed during several evaluation meetings by the four of them and their core group teacher. Through expressing themselves and an open debate they came to the understanding that if they did not get passed their personal conflicts, they would not be able to reach their goal, because, as they concluded, to reach their goal they needed the right attitude and great organization.

This was a good process and it helped them improve their organization, so they became more efficient when organizing the fundraising actions, however they still were not reaching their goal.

After more evaluation within the team they concluded that they were getting better but that needed more time in order to reach their goal. They proposed to the common meeting that they have two extra weekends of fundraising and move around some practical actions in order to be able to reach everything and go to Africa on time. Their proposal was well formulated and the common meeting backed it up. After the decision was made, they went out fundraising as planned and reached their goal.

This simple example shows how the development instructors solved an issue through a PAR cycle, created change, and became more prepared to tackle the next concerns of the group.

**Example 3: Developing actions to promote the programs and get more people involved**

**Problem:** We all want more people to come to IICD and do the program.

**Data collection:** Common meeting and promotion manager.

**Data analyzing:** Common meeting and promotion manager.

**Actions taken:** Discussions, evaluations, posterizing trips.

One of the biggest and ongoing challenges of IICD the past years has been to get more participants into the program. The staff and participants have addressed this issue several times in common meetings and other meetings. One strategy proposed was to go out to Universities
and Colleges in the United States and put up many posters to attract students to join our programs. One proposal was to have volunteers coming to do this action and that the common meeting should be the one finding such volunteers. However, some expressed that since it was not a proven method, perhaps it was better to try it out before calling for people. The common meeting then decided that it was necessary to do something now; each team came with ideas and discussed them with their core group teacher. Through this process, 5 out of 6 students in the last period of the program decided to move around their plans and go out for one month to put up 43,200 posters together with their teacher. The common meeting supported their decision.

The promotions manager designed the posters, got them printed and made a route for the team to get out of the door as soon as possible. They went out and as soon as the posters started to be put up, the phone started ringing and the emails started coming. The method proved to be a good one; so the common meeting started to look for volunteers to continue this action.

In total during 2015 we put up 63,925 posters with the common meeting and two volunteers who were here for 4 months. We got 193 inquires, we enrolled 2 people and 24 are still in the pipeline hopping to move forward with their enrollment soon.

Through this PAR cycle, the common meeting has embraced the responsibility of finding volunteers and for 2016 we have lined up already a group of 5 potential volunteers, who will come to help putting the posters up. All of them are acquaintance of participants or former participants of IICD.

Example 4: Improving morning courses starting with feedback from the common meeting

**Problem:** Improving morning courses - methodology and topics.

**Data collection:** Common meeting comments, poll, teachers council meetings.

**Data analyzing:** teachers, teachers meetings.

**Actions taken:** Headlines for morning courses with a variety of methods, collecting interests for morning courses, better individual planning for the teachers to have more time to plan and prepare.

This PAR cycle started as an initiative from the common meeting, where several participants expressed how we could improve the learning processes, the methodology and the content of the courses that the teachers give every day from 8am to 9am. Some suggestions were:
to have weekly headlines for the morning courses, have more courses related to study tasks, have longer courses and include multimedia content. In addition to that, the teachers council brought the idea of asking for topics for new morning courses, so the common meeting could also get involved in choosing what is relevant for us to learn as a community of humanitarians.

On top of this discussions the teacher council took upon the task of evaluating each teacher who gives morning courses and give direct feedback on methodology and content. Each teacher wrote their feedback and presented it during a meeting where we concluded that more time for preparation and a large diversity of subjects will help us improve our teaching methods and our personal capacity to engage the participants so they are able to create knowledge.

Since the comments at the common meeting were focused on having a variety of styles, the question on more pedagogical tools, which can be developed, remained. As a complementary action a written poll was held, making sure every participant was able to answer. The question of the poll was: “What are the characteristics of a good course”, which was answered by half of the participants—the other half decided not to participate. The answers were transcribed and compiled into organized categories according to the number of repetitions.

The information gathered, as well as the process, was presented at the teachers council weekly meeting. These results reinforced the idea of bringing a variety of methods when preparing the courses and include multimedia tools as the most noticeable characteristic of a good course. The information displays in aggregate the most important characteristics to be having a wide variety of teaching methods and the aid of media as pedagogical tool included in the courses. Additional characteristics included being project-oriented, engaging, and relevant as well as understanding the courses as broader experience (expressed in change of location and extend time) if necessary for the subject, have permanent feedback and include conclusions as well as evaluations of the participants’ understanding.

A reinforcing idea for the morning courses permanent improvement was to systematize and present at the teachers council meeting the information from the teachers’ feedback and to cross it with the poll information, to have a more complete overview. The main objective is to keep continuous action on it. Some already agreed conclusions from the teachers’ council include having enough time to prepare the courses, and show this preparation on the management of the subject as well as on the material; and as avoiding repetition.
Conclusion

The examples mentioned above prove how useful it is for IICD to have PAR as a tool for improving our community life, our programs and the development of the participants. The methodology of a PAR cycle (critical reflection-action-critical reflection) is embedded in our pedagogy and the challenge is to teach our participants how to use it at their projects, how to record it and how to teach the people they work with to use it also.

Our goal for 2016 is to keep record of the PAR cycles we activate and write monthly reports together with the common meeting, as well as adding courses and study tasks related with this topic. The main objective will be to have good records for the participants and teachers to go back to and use as point of departure to always develop and not to continuously go back to the same issues or problems. The record will also help us measure our development as a community that is in constant change due to the nature of our program.

II. PAR cycles applied by the DIs at the projects in Africa in order to improve the capacity of the DIs and the group of Poor they worked with.

In 2015, 24 participants traveled to Malawi or Mozambique, of which 3 quit the program after one month at the project, and 3 are currently at the projects. We here summarize the impact of the service period for the 18 participants who completed their six-month service periods.

The 18 participants who completed their service period worked at the following projects:

- Enjoy Learning, Malawi: 3 participants
- Chilangoma Teacher Training College, Malawi: 4 participants
- Preschools Chilangoma, Malawi: 1 participant
- Mzimba Teacher Training College, Malawi: 2 participants
- Food for Knowledge, Mozambique: 5 participants
- Maputo Teacher Training College, Mozambique: 3 participants

Summaries about the projects
Enjoy Learning and Preschools
These are outreach projects in connection to the Teacher Training Colleges working with local primary school teachers to improve teaching and learning and literacy in the communities. There are 72 preschools operating around the Teacher Training Colleges in one region of Malawi with the purpose of giving children a good start in life and learning.

Teacher Training Colleges
The idea of the Teacher Training Colleges run by Humana People to People in Mozambique and Malawi is to train primary school teachers dedicated to teach in the rural areas while making them agents of change in the communities where they are going to teach. The Teacher Training program is a training designed for young teachers to become highly qualified to teach in challenging local environments.

Food for Knowledge
The aim of the Food for Knowledge Project is to improve the academic performance and to keep students in school. In order to guarantee that schools have the necessary means to prepare daily school meals, access to drinking water and adequate latrines, the project also promotes the construction and installation of warehouses, kitchens, fire wood-saving stoves, wells, water pumps and latrines.

Applied PAR at the projects in Africa

This section is complying data that shows how the service period in Africa, as an extensive international experience, transforms the DIs while at the same time improving the world we live in.

We summarize below (1) how the service period transforms the DIs, (2) how the DIs impacted the people they worked with, and (3) some concrete results of how through the service period the DIs improved the world.

We collected the data presented here through direct interviews with the DIs; through analysis of their monthly narrative reports and through written records of evaluation meetings.
held during the six months they were abroad and during their six-months conclusion period at the institute in the USA.

1. **How the service period transformed the DIs**

   We interviewed and collected data from 12 of the 18 development instructors who traveled to Africa during 2015. The data showed that the project period had a big impact in terms of personal development. From the collection we learned that confidence and leadership are highly appreciated qualities, and that no matter how much time we spend training or preparing for the project period, the experience of living shoulder to shoulder with the poor will have big impact in our personality, our development and our views of the world.

According to the testimonies collected, the DIs:

- Became more flexible and adaptable to change
- Acquired self-confidence
- Improved teaching skills
- Realized I could empower others
- Learned to understand and overcome cultural differences
- Understood the power of teamwork and community
- Appreciated how lucky they are
- Overcame frustration and became productive
- Mobilized people by showing that an action was to their advantage
- Understood:
  - the culture of the country where I worked
  - the importance of patience and hard work
  - how to be a role model
  - how to be productive with little money
  - how to create good student-teacher relationship
  - that poverty is a state of mind
  - how people can survive with few resources
  - that simple inexpensive practical solutions are possible
- Increased:
- respect for others
- ability to teach in English

Together with the DIs interviewed we concluded that the international experience working as volunteers with development projects made us more capable and more able to face the challenges of our daily life. We all feel empower and humanized after our travels.

2. **Examples of how the DIs impacted the people they worked with**

We worked with different groups according to the projects where we were and following the guidelines of our Specialization studies. Here we quote from the DMM task the criteria for selecting what we call our “Group of Poor”:

You have to define the group. It can be one or several poor families, a whole village or community, or it could even be the poor in a district, in a province or even in a whole country. We suggest you choose a group that fits well with the type of project you are working at. If you are fighting for income generating farming it could be with one or several communities; if you fight diseases of the poor it could be an even larger area; if you choose a very intense project you might choose a “smaller group size”… If you work at a Humana People to People project as a Development Instructor you must coordinate your “OWU-Fighting with the Poor project” so it fits with your current responsibilities as well as the aims and current status of the HPP project. This means you must discuss and agree with your Project Leader, with other project staff and with the NHQ of Humana People to People in your country, so as to ensure maximum benefit for the group of Poor, the HPP project and yourself.

Following these guidelines we identified as groups of Poor: a) local teachers, b) learners, c) communities and d) students training to become teachers. Some of the identified changes and development within each of these groups are:

a) local teachers
   • motivated to learn and improve teaching
   • understood they have the power to change their environment
   • motivated to take better care of the resources they have
   • improved teaching skills

b) learners (children)
• could better express their feelings to adults (teachers and parents)
• became more hygienic
• more motivated to learn

c) communities
• increased understanding and cooperation between local communities
• mobilized to take care of school environment

d) students training to become teachers
• became more active by taking part in discussions
• gained cultural understanding from our participants
• gained wider perspective on life options
• learned to budget
• trained to use a kitchen and keep it clean
• trained to set up and maintain irrigation
• motivated to work hard

We can say that through the reviewing process we realized how important it is for us as DIs to work shoulder to shoulder with the Project Leaders of HPP. It is our believe that it is almost impossible for us as DIs to achieve a sustainable and long term project that can support itself after we leave. We can recognize the impact our actions had in the groups we work with, however we cannot say that it is enough for changing the world. We conclude that a stronger cooperation with the projects is needed for us as DIs to have a bigger effect in the HPP projects at large.

3. Some concrete results of how through the service period the DIs improved the world

Here we enlist some examples of how we as development instructors change the future of people through our cooperation with Humana People to People. The data presented below was collected through interviews and analysis of narrative reports from the 18 development instructors who finished their 6 months service period in Africa. We classify the examples per projects for easy overview, not by hierarchy.

Enjoy Learning
• 5 intensive “tallular” workshops – training teachers how to produce teaching material with locally available resources.
• Organized Open Days where learners could show their parents what they have learned through dances and presentations.
• Monthly support sessions for 10 teachers to improve their teaching.
• Built 8 latrines together with the community.

Preschools
• 31 tippy taps (hand washing system) set up in preschools.
• Games introduced and promoted as teaching tools.
• Better hygienic practice improved average school attendance from 10 to 16 children daily.

Teacher Training Colleges
• Cleaned and organized the school library and established a lending system.
• Given courses about numerous topics to broaden the outlook of students-teachers.
• Given English classes.
• Mentored the students in their studies.
• Taught Capoeira and other fitness classes to increase awareness of topics related with healthy living.
• Held handcraft workshops, teaching students to make products that could be used as a basis for small businesses.
• Cleaned and organize the kitchen and trained the students to use it properly.
• Set up and irrigation system for the school garden.
• Reorganized and stabilized the school’s computer network.
• Set up a grading management system (spreadsheet).
• Gave computer classes weekly for 6 months to 20 students.

Food for Knowledge
• 53 school gardens set up in Maputo area.
• Project schools are now growing local vegetables.
• Educational material produced on CD about gardens and compost.
• 6 sustainable gardens set up (growing without seeds).
• 300 teachers taught hygienic practices around latrines (using local materials).
• Creating crafts with recycled materials such as paper, plastic bags, bottle caps, etcetera, as an income generation activity.
• 6 tippy taps (hand washing system) set up.
• Construction material for storage delivered to 45 schools.
• General sanitation improved at 1 school.
• Literacy Olympics organized to promote literacy.
• Lower absenteeism because of better nutrition of children.
• Geography classes given.

Conclusion

From these summaries we can conclude that the service period has had a significant impact in all three areas, supporting our general hypothesis. The PAR cycle methodology was used throughout our service period; in many cases as an almost natural way of analyzing and acting when facing a problem.

We identify a lack of awareness of the use of PAR and particularly a lack of teaching research to our group of Poor. We recommend the development of a teaching packet that the development instructors can take with them to introduce and implement PAR together with their group of Poor. We see a need of tools to bring awareness and also to report systematically back to IICD on our research cycles.

III. PAR cycles to prove and evaluate the personal development of the participants

Recruitment and Background

Nationalities
According to the data available, the 36 participants who started the program came mainly from Latin American countries (70%). Data also shows that the majority are female 53% against 47% male. Other regions include the United States and South Korea.

**Education and Work Experience**

Participants are mainly people with a bachelor degree (22 people), which is not related to international studies – only 1 person had studies in this field. Also, related to education, IICD participants include people with more than one BA almost in the same scale as they include people with studies on a post graduate level; 7 and 6 participants, respectively. Finally, we miss educational information for 8 participants.

Eighteen participants had previous work experience of which 14 had worked as managers. Two had military service and 9 had been working as volunteers. Twenty had been traveling abroad, and 11 did not enter any work experiences in the forms.

**How the participants heard about the program**

- 10 participants heard about IICD’s program though internet.
- 5 participants got referred to the program by friends or professors.
- 3 participants heard about the program at fairs.
- 5 participants saw an ad in newspapers.
- 13 participants did not answer.
Reasons of enrollment

We can understand from the graphic above that people got involved in the program because they wanted to do good and to have a new experience.

**How the participants “became better people” through the program**

To test our main hypothesis we use 12 parameters to evaluate the development of the participants. Every three months, the participants give themselves points on a scale of 1 to 5 in each parameter.

The parameters have been defined by the teachers council as those which in our experiences are essential qualities for a development instructor.

The 12 parameters are:

- Ability to plan
- Work effectively
- Take decisions
- Communication
- Handling economy
- Being flexible
- Capacity to mobilize
- Keeping agreement
- Being responsible
- Reaching out to team mates
- Concerned about the well-being of others
- Building relationships

Here is the data from the 13 participants which we have full data from:

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>Improved</th>
<th>No improvement</th>
<th>Got worse</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to plan</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work effectively</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take decisions</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handling economy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being flexible</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity to mobilize</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping agreements</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Being responsible</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reaching out to team mates</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned about wellbeing of others</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building relationships</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
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</tbody>
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Analyzing the data, we can see:

- That the vast majority of the participants feel they have improved in the following areas: the ability to plan, work effectively, taking decisions, communication, being flexible, and reaching out to teammates.
- That the participants did not see significant improvements in handling economy, capacity to mobilize, keeping agreements, being concerned about the well-being of others and building relationships, as they gave themselves same points after 3 months and 6 months.
That one participant found him/herself becoming less capable in communication, reaching out to teammates and being concerned about the well being of others.

Although we do not have complete data from all participants, we can see a clear picture that all participants answering have indicated that they improved in half of the parameters through the program.

Discussing further some of the reasons why there was no improvement in the other half of the parameters we questioned if the questionnaires are good enough for us to draw conclusions, or if in some cases the participants felt that they were already very good or even experts in, for example, handling economy or mobilizing, consequently they self-evaluate little improvement, even if they may have actually improve thanks to the practice of such activity.

It is recommended that IICD works with the self-evaluation process thoroughly and using more methods such as recordings and narrative testimonies after 3 months. The exercise of self-evaluating is discussed in teams together with the team leader, and it is usually debated with and analyze by the individuals. Such analysis should be recorded and used for the study of data, the reflective process of the PAR cycle, the decision of the next actions, the implementation, and the conclusive report of 2016.

CONCLUSION

We believe that we have tested and verified our hypothesis through our work and programs in 2015. The implementation of PAR cycles through out the Development Instructor Program has proven to be the right methodology to measure our effects, to improve and to get results from our actions.

As organization we can conclude that embracing Participatory Action Research has become crucial for our development. The methodology gives us the perfect tools for creating an environment of practical and participatory activism, which we believe is relevant for fulfilling our mission.

We can see there are tools that we as organization need to develop and we can clearly state that it is thanks to the participatory process of researching that we have found out how to improve the program, enhance the effects of it and grow our organization.
Based on the results from the PAR forms filled out by the participants, the debates carried out by different groups and the collection of PAR cycle testimonies we think it is safe to say that the participants changed through the program and become more capable persons.

However, the data also show us that there are areas we as PAR researchers need to focus on to get better results and have a greater impact. Our plan for 2016 includes the use of multimedia tools for recording testimonies and data; the development of a PAR packet for DIs to take with them to their projects with materials for them to teach and carry out research; a database for recording PAR cycles carried out by the common meeting, and a systematic approach to the PAR cycles for getting better and complete information at the end of the year.
CITED BIBLIOGRAPHY

