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by ACCIONISTAS - '65

ACCION EN VENEZUELA
Apartado 6561
Caracas D.F.
February 18, 1965

Mr. Forrest Murden
International Relations Consultants
39 E 5th St.
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Murden:

It is the feeling of many of us Northamerican workers of ACCION EN VENEZUELA that the New York members of the Board of Directors have a somewhat distant contact with the actual work of ACCION and that it is difficult for them to obtain an accurate feeling for the fruits of their labors in the States, so vital to our existence here and to the existence of ACCION. I would like to present some of my own personal opinions and experiences during my six months with ACCION in the hopes that they will bring you up to date on ACCION's role in Venezuela and to a realization of the great need for and value of your endeavors on our behalf.

I began working the end of September, after six weeks of intensive language training and two weeks of instruction in community action - a very complete course designed by ACCION, which included many examples of past experiences of the organization and seminars held in the Caracas barrios where ACCION is working. I was sent to a new barrio for ACCION, located just outside of Caracas in what comprises the Seventh and newest Zone, with a Venezuelan student of Architecture, Rómulo López. I have continually found him a fine person to work with - totally involved and dedicated to his task. For the first four months we moved slowly, getting to know the people, letting them get to know us, and gaining their confidence by beginning a number of small activities: sewing, cooking, and adult education classes, movies, the formation of a Boy Scout Troup, a Children's Party and a Christmas program. These activities were oriented around various barrio groups - families, friends, women, young girls, young boys, etc.

In December, Rómulo and I gained the help of another hand, Jonathan Brower, a '62 graduate of Amherst College who worked with the American Friends Service Committee in Haiti for a year and a half after his graduation. The three of us have now finalized our plans for the next eight months (please see enclosed presentation) and are excited by the potential we see. Of primary importance, because it has proven (with its various functions and innate meaning) to be the key to community action - to changing attitudes often so fatalistic and to forming community spirit - is the acquisition of a community Educational Center within the barrio which will serve as a school and a meeting place for all other barrio activities. In January we obtained a provisional local by working through a barrio woman's committee

which I formed by inviting to a meeting all the women who had worked hard on previous projects. I discussed with them the idea of forming a permanent committee which would meet weekly and work toward the physical, educational and cultural betterment of the Barrio. They voted to form the committee and decided on the Community Educational Center as their first project, from which would evolve other projects. I am acting solely as coordinator; they are taking almost full responsibility, raising the money with the barrio to pay the rent, mobilizing people to fix up the local, obtaining teachers, and registering students for both day and night classes. I am guiding them in community action methods so that I will be able to leave after a year, assured that the program will continue without me. This Educational Center will open Monday with day classes for 100 six and seven year old children, night classes in Adult Education and Sewing, and movies once a week. We hope it will also soon be serving as a barrio communication center and possibly an employment bureau.

Once the provisional Center is functioning satisfactorily, plans for the construction of a larger building with a capacity for 500 students will begin. At this point, the woman's committee will be amplified by men, the cooperation of the whole barrio will be sought, through a series of barrio meetings, and businesses and the government will be approached for support.

Another facet of our program includes the formation of an "economic group" - a loose organization of barrio men and women interested in looking into the possibilities of forming a small industry or cooperative for unemployed people which would hopefully realize capital to be utilized in the development of other small industries. This program has a more long range time scheme, but important permanent implications in preparing the people to cope with their problems and in providing opportunities for them to adjust better to the city life they could not envision when living in the interior of the country.

I think the most impressive fact about ACCION for me has been the very uniqueness of its approach and, thus, the great need for this organization totally unconnected with both the U.S. or Venezuelan government, but able to use the resources of both when the occasion arises. It is giving me a fine lesson in private enterprise, both the development of the capitalistic spirit of initiative and competition, and the great role that private companies can and should play in the economic and political stability of a nation. Because of the terrific wealth in Venezuela and the, at least, democratic structure of the government, if not at all times nations, there is great potential here for just such progress of private enterprise and the creation of opportunity. Being an ACCION worker is much more than a chance for travel and a chance to learn another language while doing some good deeds - always a possibility with an organization of idealistic social aims which depends on young U.S. citizens - for ACCION has a lasting value and a great importance. It mobilizes existing resources, changes attitudes, and coordinates the various efforts toward development so that there is no duplication or waste of energy.

I hope this gives you some idea of what I have been doing. If you have any questions or desire further information, please let me know. I shall be glad to help in whatever way possible. With many thanks, and I feel I speak for all of us working here, for your past support and interest and your future endeavors, I remain,

Very sincerely,

Christina Downey

**PRESENTATION: Past Work and Future Plans
Barrio "12 de Octubre"**

**Rémiro López
Jonathan Brover
Christine Devney
ACCION EN VENEZUELA
February, 1965**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. What is ACCION EN VENEZUELA?
- II. Description of Barrio "12 de Octubre"
- III. ACCION Workers Assigned to "12 de Octubre"
- IV. Summary of ACCION's Work in "12 de Octubre"
- V. Plans for the Next Eight Months

I. WHAT IS ACCION EN VENEZUELA?

ACCION is democracy in action. It is an idea of community action practiced in the urban barrios of Venezuela with a view to human changes and to the development of those new community attitudes which arise from the forces of mutual assistance.

The programs of community action have given magnificent tangible results; such as, for example, the construction of schools, community centers, sewers and water pipes, the organization of technical training centers, cooperatives, small industries and recreation programs in many parts of Venezuela. Still more important, however, are the intangible results; the development of positive and dynamic attitudes, community spirit, the formation of responsible and democratic leaders, the development of social, organizational and administrative abilities, and the fomentation of community institutions which prove to the people that they have the power to help themselves, to better their lives and to participate more actively and effectively in a difficult transition period of their country.

This idea of community action manifests itself in ACCION EN VENEZUELA, a private, Venezuelan, non-profit organization which has existed since September 1961 when it was founded by Joseph H. BLATCHFORD of the United States with a nucleus of 30 workers who initiated activities in 20 communities. Since that time, ACCION has tripled and now consists of 63 workers actuating in 50 communities throughout Venezuela. The majority of the workers live in the same barrios in which they realize their labors of community action, feeling the catalytic force which stimulates the inhabitants to look for new solutions to their own problems.

The financing of annual operational expenses proceeds principally from Venezuelan companies and foreign companies established in Venezuela. This financing has produced a quantity of new investments in barrio betterment programs. In a detailed study of 30 ACCION projects in 1963, ACCION noted that the amount of new capital invested in each one of the barrios surpassed the quantity of \$100,000*. Of this sum, 60% came from outside the barrio, and 40% from within the barrio itself.

II. DESCRIPTION OF BARRIO "12 DE OCTUBRE"

Location:	La Urbina, Petare, Miranda.
Population:	2,000 inhabitants
Facilities:	Some water pipes light in every house Some cement stairways Cement gutters
Businesses:	One grocery store One hardware store Six small grocery shops
Needs:	Sewers Paved streets Cement stairways School for 500 children Water for every house Community Center

III. ACCION WORKERS ASSIGNED TO "12 DE OCTUBRE"Rómulo A. López N.

- Born in Corc, Falcon
- Came to Caracas in 1960 to study architecture
- Joined ACCION August 27, 1964
- His plans for the future: To use his acquired experiences as a university professional and as an ACCION worker for the betterment of the Republic, especially the state of Falcon.

Jonathan P. Brooker

- Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts
- Graduated from Amherst College, Mass. in 1961
- Took practical studies in Community Organization at Columbia University, New York, 1963-64
- Worked from 1961 until 1963 in community action in Haiti with the American Friends Service Committee
- Joined ACCION September 26, 1964

Christine Downey

- Born in New York City, New York
- Completed her B.A. in Political Science at Mount Holyoke College, Massachusetts in June, 64
- Spent 15 months studying and traveling (1962-63) in Southeast Asia and Africa. It was during this time that her interest in community action was born.
- Joined ACCION June 20, 1964
- Her plans for the future: Continue with community action work professionally as a field worker or in an administrative capacity.

IV. SUMMARY OF ACCION'S WORK IN "12 DE OCTUBRE"**Duration:**

4 months

Objectives:

Become acquainted with the people, via their confidence and involve members of the community in small activities. These small activities had different aims: educative, economic, recreative. Together all these activities created the need for a Community Center.

Methods:

This aim was achieved through initiating many small projects which could be realized quickly and with little organization.

Activities realized:1. Movies

Date: Every Tuesday evening

Place: Main road of the barrio

Equipment: Loaned by USIS (United States Information Service)

Movies: Loaned by USIS and various companies, such as Shell and Creole

Cost: Free

Organizers: Three men from the barrio aided by the ACCION workers. The Shell Company is going to take full responsibility for the program.

February, 1965

2. Sewing Class

Teacher: A woman from the barrio, professional
Place: House of the teacher
Duration: 4 months (November-February)
Times: 2 weekly, 2 hours each
Number: 4 students
Cost: Registration - B.2 / Each Class - B.1
Equipment: Supplied by the teacher and the student
Graduation: Certificate in Elemental Cutting and Sewing

Responsible for the Administration:

The teacher and women selected and trained by the workers.

3. Adult Education:

Teacher: Student, 4th year in Normal School
Place: House in the barrio
Duration: 2 months
Times: 3 weekly, 2 hours each
Number: 8 students
Cost: Registration - B.2 / Each Class - B.1
Equipment: Supplied by the students, Blackboard donated by the Dept. of Architecture Central University

Situation: The class is suspended until the Educational Center is ready for use

4. Economic Group

Instructor: Ministry of Labor, Dept. of Cooperatives
 Rómulo López of ACCION, and the Central Office of ACCION

Place: House in the barrio
Number: 16 men and women
Cost: Free

Activity: Investigate the possibilities of starting a small industry or **COOPERATIVE IN THE BARRIO.**

5. Boy Scouts

Chief: Mr. José Sandoval, (from the barrio)
Number: 20 boys, age 11-13
Place: House of Mr. Sandoval and land in the barrio.
Equipment: 8 packs and 20 canteens were donated by the army. More is still needed.
Organizers: The chief, the National Association of Scouts, and the Parents Committee comprised of 10 parents and its board of directors.

February, 1965

6. Cooking Class

Teacher: National Institute of Nutrition

Duration: 3 months

Place: House in barrio "Sucre"

Times: 1 weekly of 3 hours

Number: 7 women from "12 de Octubre"

Graduation: Realized December 22, 1964 with the receipt of certificates and a display

7. Children's Party

Date: October 12, 1964 to commemorate the Discovery of America and especially the name day of the barrio.

Duration: 10:30 AM until 4:30 PM

Activities: Games, contests, races and piñatas

Donations: EFE Ico Cream - 500 sticks

Pepsi Cola - 4 glasses for each of

1000 people

Hit of Ven. - 4 glasses for each of

1000 people

4 prizes

- 200 pasteries and

coffee

- 80 lbs. of caramels

- loan of street decora-

tions (200 meters)

Organizers: 27 people of the barrio with assistance of the ACCION workers

8. Christmas Program

Activities: Distribution of 500 gifts and construction of a crèche

Organizers: 25 men and women of the barrio

Assistants: 5 university students

Materials: Gathered in the barrio

Toys: Bought with money raised from 3 raffles and a bingo game

9. Trips for Children

Times: 2 - One to historic sights. The other to the Children's Hospital and parks.

Number: 25 children

Organizers: 8 university students and ACCION workers

Duration: Each one 1 day

Cost: Free

10. Acquisition of the provisional Educational Center "Abajo Cadenas"

Local: Deposit of the Grocery Store in the Barrio.

Cost: Rented for Bs.200 monthly, plus cost of electricity

Organizers: Women's Committee (15 women of the barrio).

V. PLANS FOR THE NEXT EIGHT MONTHS

Objectives: Teach the people how to work together with community spirit, how to solve their own problems, and how to develop institutions of the community and responsible leaders. Form a community which functions through permanent institutions.

Method: Begin large projects which include the entire community. Unify in the provisional center all the activities already functioning. Use the acquisition of a permanent Center as the key.

Activities:

1. Functioning of the provisional Educational Center "Abajo Cadenas"

Organizers: Activity's Committee

Activities: a. Continue the Boy Scouts, Movies, Sewing Class, and Economic Group

b. Functioning of the provisional school

Grades: Preparatory

Teachers: 2 profesionales

Materials and equipment: Needed

Salaries: Promised by the Municipal Government

Number: 1000 children in turns of 100

c. Recreation Program

Instructor: From YMCA

Sports: Swimming, Baseball, Basketball, Volleyball

Places: Miranda Park, José Félix Rivas Park, Court and Field of the District Police Dept., YMCA Camp Schlageter

Cost: Bs.36 weekly - salary of instructor paid by the North American Association

Equipment: Donated by the NAA

- d. Other possibilities
 Communication Center
 Employment Bureau
 Classes in Mechanics, Cooking, Hair-
 dressing, Carpentry, Gardening,
 Painting
 Parties
 Meetings

e. Funds

The Woman's Committee is collecting
 from two raffles monthly, B.500.
 More is still needed.

2. Preparations of the Construction of a Permanent
 Educational Center

Organizers: Activity 's Committee

- Steps: a. Local
 b. Technical aid
 c. General meeting of the barrio

Duration: 1½ months

3. Construction of the Permanent Educational Center

Organizers: Construction Committee

- Steps: a. Money and Materials
 b. Mobilization of the barrio
 c. Work schedule

Manual

Labor: People of the barrio

Duration: 4½ months

4. Install Sewers (370 meters)

Organizers: Sewer Committee

Equipment: National Institute of Sanitation (INOS)

Manual

Labor: People of the barrio

Duration: 8 weeks

5. Habilitation of a Dispensary

Organizers: Organizing Committee of the Educational
 Center

Local: Provisional Educational Center

Equipment: Needed

Doctors: Needed

Medicines: Needed

Duration: 1 month