

NGO MISSION AND STAFF PERCEPTION
A CASE STUDY OF THE FINCA DEL NIÑO

Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy Thesis

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Executive Summary

In the non-profit world, much is made of the importance of a well-conceived and constructed mission and mission statement that is operationalized by a strategic plan. This paper argues that these organizational tools are important but are not sufficient for mission-effectiveness to be useful criteria for decision making within an organization. The paper argues that employee perception is a key part of transforming mission from an organizational planning tool into a set of criteria that permeates decision making at both the organizational level and at the level of individual staff members. The paper investigates these ideas through a case study of the Finca del Niño, a small orphanage on the north coast of Honduras.

The first section of the paper investigates staff perception of the organization's mission through interviews conducted with 28 staff members. The key findings of this section are that 1. Staff members' articulation of the mission is in agreement with the formal mission statement and 2. Staff feels that there is agreement among staff members on what the mission is. In addition to these core findings there were several other noteworthy observations:

- a. Staff feels that the mission of the Finca is not limited to the orphan children, but extends to the adults and surrounding communities.
- b. There was a perception that when the mission statement refers to "productive members of society" that really means "productive members of **Honduran** society."
- c. There was disagreement about whether the first children to leave the Finca represented success of the mission.
- d. There were interesting responses when employees were asked if they felt their co-workers were primarily motivated by the mission of the Finca or by self-interest.

- e. Employees who worked on the Finca proper in Honduras were unable to identify an individual who for them had the best understanding of the mission of the Finca, while board members quickly identified either Zulena Pescatore or Christine Adela Turner.
- f. A nun who was interviewed pointed out that the name of their order is the “Franciscanas Cooperadoras” and that their role is cooperate in whatever mission they are assigned to.

The second section of the paper takes this understanding of the role of staff perception of the mission and applies it to a programmatic decision. It first outlines a policy analysis framework that can be used to evaluate a decision based on mission effectiveness and then traces the decision making process within the Finca del Niño. The paper then makes recommendations for further conversations within the Finca. Topics for these conversations include indicators for success of the mission, the mechanics of how mission is transmitted within the organization, the impact of turnover on community and how the unity of mission and vision can be maintained as a new leadership structure is put into place in Fall 2008.

Finally the paper argues that the Finca del Niño represents an example of how staff perception can expand the role of an organization’s mission statement from a formal tool for organizational use into a practical set of criteria for individual decision making.

I. Introduction

Non-profit organizations are distinct from for-profit corporations in many ways. One simplistic distinction is that corporations are profit driven and NPOs are mission driven. While corporations have mission statements, ultimately profit is the bottom line. Conversely, while non-profit organizations must be concerned with the financial bottom line, their ultimate goal should be their mission statement. While a good mission statement and strategic plan are important to the success of an organization, equally important are the ways in which an organization's staff learn about, understand and ultimately act on their perceptions of the organization's mission.

Using the Finca del Niño as a case study this project will investigate four primary questions: How are the mission, vision and goals of an NGO perceived by staff and board members of an organization? How do those perceptions resemble or differ from the stated mission and vision of the organization? Is there perceived agreement among the staff, particularly across divisions such as role or nationality? How do those perceptions influence decision making?

This study has three sections that build on and inform each other. The first section is background of the organization and the mission of the organization as derived from its formal mission statement. With this basis the second section consists of interviews conducted across the range of staff members and seeks to describe the ways in which mission is perceived, articulated and debated among staff members. The final section considers a programmatic decision made in 2006. The first part of this section is a policy analysis written from the perspective of program staff at the time. The second part compares the staff-based policy analysis with interviews of the

leadership and board members to determine if the same criteria for analysis were used across decision making levels and how mission perception influenced this process.

Background of the Organization

The Finca del Niño is located in rural Honduras about 30 minutes down a dirt road from the nearest city of Trujillo, Colón (population 30,000). The Finca cares for approximately 50 orphan children ranging in age from 1 to 20 years old. Children live in one of eight houses that are organized by age and gender and each four bedroom house has approximately 6 children living in it. The Finca itself is in an idyllic setting on 12 acres of land beachfront on the Caribbean Sea with 3,000 foot mountains rising in the distance. In addition to the orphan homes the Finca operates a PreK – 9th grade school whose students are both from the Finca itself and the surrounding villages (roughly 50% each). There is also a medical clinic staffed by a nurse, community outreach program, and a Catholic chapel, all of which are open to the surrounding villages.

The Finca is staffed by a mixture of Honduran and American staff. The director and assistant to the director are Catholic nuns from Central America. A third nun directs religious life on the Finca. Each home is staffed by Honduran house parents who take primary responsibility for raising the children. American volunteers serve in a variety of support roles, including as the sub-director (the second-in-command on the Finca), social workers, teachers, and in maintenance. The school staff is approximately half Honduran and half American with most math and science courses taught by Americans and Spanish and social studies courses taught by Hondurans.

History of the Finca

In 1993 Vincent and Zulena Pescatore moved to Trujillo, Honduras to begin construction of an orphanage with the support of the local Catholic bishop. This would be the second orphanage that the couple, Vincent, an American from New Jersey, and Zulena, from Antigua, Guatemala, had founded and it too would be called the Finca del Niño. With the support of many local community members and three volunteers (recent graduates of the University of Notre Dame), the Finca del Niño was preparing to accept its first orphans in January 1996 when Vincent was tragically killed in a light-plane accident. He was flying a small donated plane and ferrying volunteers and supplies to complete construction. In spite of this tragedy, Zulena, a mother of five, decided to continue with the opening of the orphanage. The school opened in March of 1996 and the Finca accepted its first orphans in May 1996.

In 1997 a group of American supporters formed the Farm of the Child USA (a 501c (3) non-profit) and established a Board of Directors to assist the organization financially and logistically. Long-term volunteers continued to be an important element of support for the Finca, as the experience of the first three volunteers led to the institution of a formal volunteer program that accepts volunteers for 2 year service commitments. Zulena Pescatore continued as director of the Finca until 2000 when she decided that she needed to move back to Guatemala to meet the needs of her children. As a result the Board asked an order of nuns, the Franciscan Sisters of Central America, to provide the long term leadership of the Finca, thus paving the way for the current leadership structure.

Leadership Structure

The Finca has five main departments: school, social work, clinic, maintenance, and community outreach. In 2006 all of these departments were led by American volunteers. These

departments report to “Direction” which is the collective term used for the three member team that runs the Finca on an operational basis. This three member team consists of two Franciscan nuns and one American volunteer. One of the nuns is the director, while the other is the assistant to the director. The American volunteer is the sub-director and second in command on the Finca. The director is appointed for a five-year term, while the sub-director changes every 1-2 years and the assistant to the director can change at any time.

This arrangement has been generally successful but at times results in confusion and conflict about clear lines of decision making. Two main areas of difficulty are around supervisory roles and the role of the assistant to the director. The director is responsible for supervising the Honduran staff and the sub-director is the head of the volunteer community and their direct supervisor. This arrangement can be confusing when Honduran staff and American staff are mixed in each of the departments. Confusion regarding the role of the assistant to the director originates with ambiguity over whether she is *assistant director* or *assistant to the director*. This arrangement generally functions, but results in a constant tension as decisions and leadership must be achieved by consensus to avoid obvious conflict.

The final element of the leadership structure is the influence of the Board of Directors. Technically there are two boards, one for the Farm of the Child USA (the fundraising organization) and a Honduran board for the Finca del Niño. Recently, the Honduran board has had very little influence on the organization although this is something that the organization is working to change. The Board of Directors of Farm of the Child USA¹ plays a large role because virtually all of the funding comes through Farm of the Child USA. In addition to fundraising and volunteer recruitment, the role that has emerged for the Board is to provide the vision and long-term strategic planning that support the day-to-day operation of the Finca. All major changes

¹ Hereafter the term “board” will be used to refer to the Board of Directors of Farm of the Child USA.

either to the physical plant or to programmatic aspects of the Finca must be approved by the Board.²

Mission Statement of the Finca del Niño

In gratitude for the great love that Jesus Christ gives to us, we decide to unite ourselves to form a community to care for needy children and to promote the development of a productive society of devout Christians.

Breaking down the mission statement into its component parts allows the mission statement to be used as criteria for measuring mission effectiveness. The Finca mission statement clearly outlines why, how and what is to be done as well as the organization's broader vision for society.

Why?

“In gratitude for the great love that Jesus Christ gives to us.” This part of the mission clearly states the organizational motivation for why they are doing what they do. The actions come from a sense of gratitude and are steeped in a faith-based perspective of those actions.

How?

“We decide to unite ourselves to form a community.” This part of the mission sets out in what manner the work will be done. This aspect of community alters the approach to work so that it is not individuals working toward a common goal, but the actual formation of a community who will together work toward a single, common goal.

What is to be done and vision for society

“To care for needy children and promote the development of a productive society of devout Christians.” This statement outlines the scope of work, which seeks to both meet the immediate

² In late 2007 the board of directors made a decision to change the leadership structure of the Finca del Niño. While they hope to have the continued presence of the Franciscan sisters as staff members, the board decided to hire a full-time lay director. At the time of writing (Spring 2008) the board is actively recruiting a new director with an anticipated start date of late summer or early fall 2008.

goal of caring for “needy children” while preparing them to enter a “productive society of devout Christians.”³ This second part also represents the organization’s broader vision for society and the understanding that their role is to “promote the development” of that society. The Finca sees its role in promoting that society as raising children and helping them grow into adults who:

- Have a firm moral foundation that is rooted in their Catholic faith.
- Are capable of supporting themselves and their families.
- Seek to live in service of others, whether it is their families, communities or the broader society.

³ Defining the terms “a productive society of devout Christians” is incredibly difficult and is the subject of rigorous debate. Understanding of this term within the Finca varies from the extremes of “give the kids a primary education and send them off to be manual laborers” to “we need to raise these children to be the college educated future leaders of Honduras.” A further explication of this discussion is beyond the scope of this paper and thus I have included the prevailing opinion within the organization, but I note it here.

II. Staff Mission Perception

This section examines interviews conducted across the range of staff members and seeks to describe the ways in which mission is perceived, articulated, and debated among staff members. The interview methodology is first described and then followed by the findings of the interviews.

Interview Methodology

The field work for this section was conducted in February and March of 2008 and consisted of confidential interviews with employees of the Finca del Niño. The interviews were confidential in order to ensure that employees could speak freely without fear of repercussions about difficult issues that are central to the operation of the organization. Interviews were conducted at the Finca del Niño in Trujillo, Honduras from February 10th to February 15th and in the United States from March 1st to March 12th. In total, 28 of the 63 employees and board members of the Finca were interviewed including 8 house parents, 4 Honduran teachers, 3 Franciscan sisters, 6 American volunteers, and 7 U.S. board members⁴.

Interviews of the house parents, teachers, nuns, and volunteers were conducted in person at the Finca del Niño. Interviews of board members were conducted by phone in the U.S. The interview format was a semi-structured open ended interview.⁵ Interview subjects were chosen intentionally with an effort to represent the range of opinions pertaining to the research questions. Employees and former employees themselves were consulted to try and identify outliers on both sides of the spectrum and an effort was made to include in the sample both outliers and those who fell in the mainstream. The sample is deemed to be representative of the

⁴ For the purposes of this study the U.S. Program Administrator is considered a board member. While the administrator is not a voting member of the board of directors they coordinate board activity and serve as the liaison between the U.S. board and the leadership of the Finca.

⁵ See Appendix A for interview script.

group as a whole based on the large percentage of employees interviewed (44%) as well as the feedback from employees at debriefing where preliminary observations were presented.

Limitations

While this study includes five distinct classes of employees, it omits three types of employee. It does not include the maintenance workers who live in nearby villages, the *ayudantas*, the single women who live in the children's homes and work closely with the house parents to maintain the home and raise the children, or the gate watchmen who monitor security on the Finca. The omission of these employees was a logistical necessity given the time frame in which interviews could be conducted and does not imply that their perception of mission is not important to Finca or conceptually to the work of this project. Given more time and resources a further study would benefit from consideration of the perspective of these employees as well as the perspectives of the community members who live near and interact with the Finca on a daily basis, but in this researcher's opinion their omission does not substantially alter the findings of the study.

Bias

This researcher worked for the organization from October 2004 to December 2006. As such, prior knowledge of the organization, people and organizational dynamics is a concern. It has been made clear within the second section of the paper where the researcher's personal experiences informed the analysis (particularly in the section on the Phase II decision) and elsewhere efforts have been made to focus the analysis on the results of the interview. An additional risk of bias is contained in the researcher's past working relationship with interview subjects. Of the 28 subjects interviewed less than 25 percent worked with the researcher

previously. In addition efforts were made to limit the impact of personal relationships in the interview, but it is noted here.

Definitions - Mission, Vision and Practical Implementation

In the interview findings below I distinguish between the terms “mission”, “vision”, and “practical implementation.” These terms merit an initial description of how they are utilized. “Mission” is used to describe the overarching goals of the organization as articulated in the mission statement and by the employees of the Finca. “Vision” in this instance refers to the vision that employees have for both society and individual children if the mission of the Finca is successful. Typically this was elicited by asking, “If the mission of the Finca is successful, can you describe what a typical graduate of the Finca looks like when they are 30 years old?” “Practical Implementation” is used to describe the programs, techniques, and approaches that are used to achieve the mission and vision of the Finca. Examples of practical implementation would be school curriculum, a security plan, or a character development program.

Quantitative Terminology

In the interview findings quantitative terminology such as “a few” or “several” is used to describe the results of the interviews. Here are guidelines for interpretation of that terminology.

Term	# of Interviews	%
A few	2-4	10-15%
Several	4-13	15-45%
About half	13-15	45-55%
Most	15-26	55-90%
Nearly All	26-27	90-95%

Interview Findings

In interviewing the staff and board members of the Finca this research focused on two core questions: first whether each individual could articulate the three key components of the

mission statement that I outlined above. Second, whether or not they felt that other members of the organization would articulate the mission in the same way. This section reviews the interview results in light of these two core questions and offers additional observations that emerged from the interviews.

Articulation of the Mission

Using the explication of the mission from earlier in this paper as a framework, it was clear that each Finca employee and board member⁶ was able to articulate the central elements of the mission. As can be expected there was some variation in the depth, sophistication, and priority given to each of the elements, but the central finding was that each subject interviewed was able to articulate why the Finca exists, how it sought to achieve its mission, and what work was to be done.

The Finca's foundation as a faith-based organization provides a clear motivation for its existence. This founding motivation was reflected in the interviews as each employee reflected at some point in the interview on either personal motivations or organizational motivations driven by faith. This provides the Finca with an advantage in that even before a discussion begins on what is to be done or how to do it there is an underlying unity that results from a common agreement on why the work is to be done in the first place.

The next component of the mission is how the work is to be done. The concept of community is central to the mission of the Finca and this was reflected in the interviews. The vision of community articulated by each interviewee varied, but what was common to all was a sense that building a community formed the core of the work to be accomplished.

⁶ Hereafter I will use the generic term employee to refer to all who work at or for the Finca as an employee, volunteer or board member. Where there are distinctions between groups I will identify which particular group I am referring to.

The final component of the mission statement is the section that outlines what is to be done and the ultimate vision for society, “To care for needy children and promote the development of a productive society of devout Christians.” When asked to articulate the basic work that the farm does and what it seeks to achieve, each employee described work and a vision for the future that fell within the broad categories outlined by the mission statement.

Perception of Unity

Having each employee articulate their view of the mission of the organization, they were then asked them if there was general agreement among employees on what the mission of the Finca was. This question distinguished between mission, vision, and the practical implementation of steps to achieve the mission and the vision. The results were that employees in general felt that there was unity among the staff in mission and vision and that where difficulties and differences arose it was in the practical implementation of how to achieve those larger goals. Importantly this perception of agreement spanned across all five distinct groups identified within the organization. Often the initial response indicated deep disagreements, but when asked to reflect further these disagreements fell into the category of differences of opinion on how to implement the shared values of mission and vision not the mission and vision themselves.

A good example of this came from two house parents who spoke about the mandatory activities on the Finca. Discussing both the schedule of daily prayer and the large number of required activities for house parents these two employees were explicit that they were not questioning the goals of the activities (parent formation and creating a community centered on faith). Rather, they were questioning whether having so many mandatory activities was creating the desired result or was in fact getting in the way of the desired result. To paraphrase several

employees, the general sentiment was, *Yes, I think we all agree on the mission of the farm, yes we agree on the type of children we hope Finca kids will grow up to be, but where we get into disagreements is in how to get them there.*

While the perception of unity was clearly evident, there was some hesitation on the part of the American volunteers and board members when asked if the Honduran employees shared the same mission and vision as they did. Frequently, there was a pause and they said they weren't really sure or hadn't talked with them enough about it to be able to say for sure. A few volunteers and board members thought that the house parents' and/or sisters' vision for the Finca kids may be different than theirs, but they didn't really know. One board member worried that employees who work in Honduras didn't see how faith-centered the board of directors' decisions were and was concerned that they were seen as practical, logistical decisions rather than decisions driven by their core understanding of the mission.

Despite these minor discrepancies, the perception of unity among employees is remarkable for two reasons. First, the fact that there is agreement on mission and vision between Honduran house parents, Central American nuns, Honduran teachers, American volunteers and an American board of directors is remarkable because the organization has been able to create this agreement across a truly heterogeneous staff that is multi-cultural, multi-lingual, spans a wide socio-economic range, and is geographically diverse. Second, when the employees were asked to reflect on whether the disagreements over practical implementation were good or bad for the organization, there was near unanimous consent that those disagreements were good for the organization. The tension was seen as a creative tension that could be incredibly difficult at times, but most often resulted in making better decisions for the children.

Other Noteworthy Observations

Beyond the core findings that there is both an almost universal ability to articulate the mission and vision of the organization, and that there is a broadly perceived unity in mission and vision; there were several noteworthy observations from the interviews.

Who is Included in the Mission

Several employees remarked that the mission of the Finca did not encompass just the kids, but all of the employees as well. One of the nuns remarked that there were almost two missions: to care for needy children and to provide formation to the adults who serve them. Several volunteers and former volunteers serving on the board talked about how they felt they got more out of their involvement with the project than they gave. A house parent spoke about the gratitude they felt to the Finca for both the financial opportunities provided by the Finca but also about the personal development they had undergone. A board member articulated this best when they said that the mission statement's call to "promote a productive society of devout Christians" is not limited to the orphan children that the Finca cares for.⁷ The very act of forming a community to care for needy children serves to promote that vision for society through the actions of those who serve the children.

Similarly, when asked how the neighbors of the Finca fit into the mission of the Finca, a teacher remarked that how the Finca treats its neighbors is an example to the children of how they should treat others. If part of the mission is to raise children who feel called to serve their neighbor, then the best way the Finca can instill that value in the children is to live it by example. For that reason, the services that the Finca provides to the larger community (medical clinic, education, inclusion in religious celebrations) and the way that members of the Finca interact

⁷ Confidential Interview, March 8, 2008.

with the surrounding community are critical examples and teaching moments that are central to the mission of the Finca.

Productive Members of (Honduran) Society

Several board members and volunteers who were interviewed said that the mission of the Finca was to help raise “productive members of Honduran society.”⁸ When alerted to the fact that the mission statement refers to “society” not “Honduran society,” there was general surprise that the mission did not specify Honduras. All employees were asked if it was important to the mission that Finca kids stayed in Honduras after leaving the Finca. Nearly all employees responded that to if it is to succeed in its mission, the Finca must raise the children to value Honduran society and to remain in Honduras. This sentiment tended to be strongest among volunteers while house parents, teachers, sisters, and board members tended to be more accepting of the economic realities that might result in a child deciding to leave Honduras; they distinguished between going to the United States illegally and leaving Honduras for education etc. All employees indicated that if a trend began to appear with former Finca kids leaving Honduras, then it would be cause to review of how the Finca was preparing its children for independent life.

This result is interesting for two reasons. First, it indicates a core belief that is shared by all employees which is not explicitly stated in the mission statement. The language used to describe this belief was very similar between interviews indicating a very strong consensus on this idea. Second, when this result was presented in a debriefing one of the volunteers remarked that it came from the Finca video, a 15 minute fundraising and recruitment video produced in 2004. The video features the sub-director using the phrase “productive members of Honduran

⁸ Confidential Interviews, February 10-March 10, 2008.

society.”⁹ While it is impossible to trace the origins of the idea, certainly the fact that it is included in a video sent to every new volunteer and many donors has significantly influenced the perpetuation of the idea.

Motivation

In the interviews in Honduras I asked each employee to talk about why they worked for the Finca and why they thought other people worked for the Finca. The responses were varied but fell into the broad categories of service and self-interest. Service was mentioned by everyone and included ideas of being mission driven, desire to work with children, and faith-based motivation. There were differences in the way the American volunteers and the Honduran employees talked about the self-interest that motivated them. The Americans talked about travel, adventure, learning a new language and professional development, while the Honduran employees spoke about the Finca as a good job in a country with few good jobs.

When American volunteers were asked why they thought other people worked for the Finca, there was often hesitation. A few indicated that they worried that the Honduran employees were there because it was a job and not because it was an opportunity to serve. Volunteers did not question the motivation of other volunteers. When asked the same question, Honduran house parents mostly viewed the motivations of American volunteers as altruistic and service oriented. Reflecting on their motivations and the motivations of other parents, they were much more comfortable with the duality of being motivated by the fact that it was both a good job and an opportunity to serve. They did not feel that the desire for a well-paying job diminished the motivation to serve. One parent even went further to say that parents who came

⁹ *Farm of the Child Video* (Accessed March 27, 2008); Available from http://farmofthechild.org/scrapbook_video.php.

only because it was a good job did not last very long because, while one may come for the money, the job is so challenging that one would only stay for the mission.

Example of the Mission

Each employee of the Farm was asked if there was a person (or persons) who have the best understanding of the Finca's mission. There was an interesting division between employees in Honduras and board members in the U.S. Most of those working in Honduras were unable to identify anyone who they felt embodied or best understood the mission (or only did so after long reflection), and there was no clear consensus on who that was. In contrast, board members in the U.S. responded very quickly with either Zulena Pescatore, the founder and current board president, or Christine Adela Turner, one of the first 3 volunteers to serve at the Finca and vice-president of the board.

The fact that Finca employees in Honduras were unable to identify someone who had the best sense of the mission is surprising given the unity of their perception of the mission. One might hypothesize that the unity indicates a strong leadership role in imparting the mission to new employees, but if that were the case then Direction should be identified as having the best understanding of the mission. That did not happen in this case.

Cooperadoras

One of the interviews with the nuns (two of whom are members of the 3-person direction team that leads the Finca) is relevant to the discussion of leadership. When speaking about the unique role of the nuns on the Finca, one of the sisters pointed out the name of their order, the Franciscanas Cooperadoras or "the cooperator Franciscans."¹⁰ "As nuns we are for whatever type of mission, so we are here because the congregation has made a commitment and to be

¹⁰ *Hermanas Franciscanas Cooperadoras Parroquiales de la Asunción* – Parish Cooperator Franciscan Sisters of the Assumption or Parochial Cooperative Franciscan Sisters of the Assumption.

Franciscanas Cooperadoras we are open to cooperate in whatever mission.”¹¹ This charism as cooperators rather than as visionaries may explain why employees and even the nuns themselves do not see the leadership as an embodiment of the mission.

Mission Success

Another difference between the employees in Honduras and the U.S. board of directors was in their divergent views of whether the first kids to leave the Finca and live independently represented success in the Finca’s mission. Since the inception of Finca, nine children have gone through the first two phases of the program and left the Farm at 18 years old or older. When asked to reflect on the experience of those young-adults as a group, nearly all of the employees in Honduras felt that they did not represent success in the mission of the Farm. In contrast nearly all of the board members interviewed felt that, while there had been many challenges, on balance the first nine kids to leave the Finca point to success in reaching its mission.

Employees in Honduras pointed to unplanned pregnancies, long hair, and stories they had heard about the circumstances under which the kids had left the Farm. The impressions of employees on the Farm came mostly from indirect contact with the children and few of those interviewed actually knew the kids on a personal basis. Board members indicated that the mission had been successful when you considered what would have happened to those children without the Finca. Many of the board members had a longer-term relationship with the children, either personally as a former volunteer or as a long-running board member who had followed the child during their time at the Finca.

Role of the Board of Directors

When asked about the role of the board, the U.S. board members clearly stated that it was their role to safeguard the mission and vision of Finca. One board member described that

¹¹ Confidential Interview, February 13, 2008.

process as approving the budget and approving major programmatic changes. There was a sense from several board members that the board, under the current leadership structure, has needed to be too involved in the day-to-day decision making on the Finca. Several expressed a desire to step back from this role while remaining the guardian of the mission once a new director is hired in Fall 2008. For their part, employees in Honduras had very little awareness of the board or their role in achieving the mission. While the director and sub-director both attend the annual board meeting in the U.S., both positions had experienced turnover since the last board meeting.

III. Phase II Decision

Taking the insights gained from field research conducted in March 2008 we not turn to a case study of a specific programmatic decision where the understanding of the mission was utilized as part of the decision making process. In June 2006 the Finca faced a difficult decision about how to raise adolescent children and prepare them to be independent adults.¹² As Director of Education at the Finca del Niño in 2006, I was part of the team that considered the alternatives before making a recommendation to the Board. This section examines that decision from the perspective of program staff by placing each of the factors that we considered into a formal policy analysis framework. This section follows a traditional policy analysis outline and considers the following elements: Background, Problem Definition, Attributes and Criteria, Alternatives, Cost and Effectiveness, Risks and Uncertainty, Conclusions and Recommendations.

Background of Phase II

In the early years of the Finca most of the children who came to live there were younger and in various stages of crisis. Most were malnourished, abused, suffered stunted growth, faced serious behavioral problems, and/or had never been to school. The immediate concern of the staff was to get a roof over their heads, food on the table, and a loving parent to care for them and teach them without resorting to physical or emotional abuse. The first years of the Finca saw a formalizing of the part of the organization referred to as Phase I which takes place on the Finca property and last from birth through roughly age 15.

¹² It should be noted that while the field interviews were conducted in Spring 2008, the decision making process discussed in this section occurred in Spring 2006. While the organization did not experience any major changes during that time, nonetheless there had been employee turnover and other changes within the organization between the Phase II decision and the interviews conducted for this study.

Once the children were stable and given the basic necessities of life, the Finca faced a larger and more complex challenge: how to make the developmental leap from healthy children to successful independent adults. In the summer of 2003 the board approved the opening of Phase II, a transition program to independent living designed for adolescents (roughly 15-20 years old) consisting of two houses (male and female) in Trujillo.

Several factors contributed to the decision to open an adolescent program and locate it off-site. The Finca had committed to supporting each child through his or her 18th birthday or through completion of high school, whichever was later. Since at that time the Finca school only went through 6th grade, the adolescents needed to commute into Trujillo to attend middle and high school.¹³ Program staff believed that placing the residential program in Trujillo would give the adolescents more opportunities to practice independent living through part time jobs, becoming involved in activities with the local church, house structures and rules geared toward independence, and a general change in atmosphere from the more sheltered environment of Phase I. Finally, given the history of abuse that many of the Finca children had experienced, the separation of adolescents from younger children was one strategy adopted to limit potential situations where the cycle of sexual abuse would continue, and instead provide opportunities for healthy relationships between all Finca residents.

For these reasons, Phase II was initiated in Trujillo in January 2004 with the opening of two houses staffed by one U.S. volunteer and one Honduran staff member in each house. Phase II operated in Trujillo in 2004, 2005 and into the 2006 school year. Significant challenges arose in implementing the program. These challenges are detailed in the analysis section of this paper,

¹³ The American terms “middle school” and “high school” are being used here to identify the levels of education in the Honduran system of *ciclo común* and *bachillerato* respectively. While these levels of education are roughly equivalent in grade levels it should be noted that they differ significantly in intent and content from their American counterparts.

but they center on the inadequacy of the educational system in Trujillo and extend to social and behavioral problems. Frustration with the education system resulted in the opening of a middle school on the Finca property in March 2005. This new middle school allowed students to be educated on the Finca through 9th grade, but this was a stopgap measure that simply moved back the critical transition from Finca education to public education from 6th grade to 9th grade. In February 2006, three Finca adolescents re-entered public education after graduating from the Finca middle school. At that time a review of Phase II was conducted by program staff and recommendations were made to the Board on how to proceed with Phase II. This review is outlined in the policy analysis that follows.

The Problem

In the spring of 2006 there was a general sense that the challenges facing Phase II in Trujillo were sufficiently grave as to merit a drastic change. The question facing the staff of the Finca and the Board of Directors was: After two years of operating the adolescent program in Trujillo, how should Phase II move forward to best meet the needs of the adolescents and prepare them for independent life?

This was a critical decision for the organization not just because it represented the critical transition to independence, but also because it dealt with the core vision that the Finca has for its children. The type of education (both formal and vocational) and the expectations that Phase I instilled in younger children needed to be paired with the realities of Phase II and the still developing Phase III which would entail the types of relationships that the Finca would have with alumni.

Attributes

Attributes are possible ways to measure success in this analysis. In this case study there are a variety of attributes which could be used to judge a successful analysis. Put simply, the attributes represent possible conclusions to the phrase: “The analysis will be deemed successful if the solution arrived at is the...” cheapest, easiest, most expedient, safest, least risky, most mission effective. While there may be other attributes of the problem these represent the most salient for consideration.

Criteria

Of these attributes mission effectiveness was chosen as the criteria for analysis for several reasons. First, being mission driven is central to the character of a non-profit organization.

The second reason is because of the religious nature of the organization. As an organization with a strong Catholic identity, the mission statement of the Finca and the general ethos are strongly tied to its religious identity. This reduces the relative importance of other factors in favor of mission effectiveness. This can be clearly seen in the type of donors that contribute to the organization. The majority of the Finca’s funding comes from small donations by family and friends who have somehow become connected to the organization. What is most important to these donors is that the Farm is mission driven and seeks to make decisions in line with that mission.

Finally, I chose mission effectiveness because the Finca has a very clearly articulated mission that permeates throughout the organization. The mission statement of the organization is well organized, relevant, and useful in making decisions about what represents success in the work of the Finca.

Alternatives

With this set of criteria for mission effectiveness established, we turn now to consider what alternatives are possible when confronted with the problem of how phase II should move forward. Program staff outlined a set of three alternatives: 1. Maintain the status quo of Phase II in Trujillo. 2. Move Phase II to La Ceiba. 3. Close Phase II and move the adolescents back to the Finca property. 4. Reduce our commitment to supporting the kids to include only a middle school education.

Options three and four were rejected almost immediately because there were not in line with the mission of the Finca or with the original motivations for opening Phase II. That left a decision between maintaining the status quo with Phase II in Trujillo and moving Phase II to La Ceiba. The following analysis outlines the effectiveness, cost, risks, and uncertainties associated with these two choices.

Effectiveness

Measuring the effectiveness and cost of each decision rested heavily on the components of the mission statement which outline what is to be done and how. Here are several of those elements.

Education

Educational challenges formed the core of the difficulties encountered with Phase II in Trujillo and extended to all other arenas of the adolescents' development.

Trujillo

To say that the system of public education in Trujillo was broken is an understatement. The two high schools in Trujillo faced similar challenges and during the first semester of 2006 students in each school attended class less than 50 percent of the time. During the entire school year there

were only 23 days on which students attended all of their classes. Classes were cancelled for a variety of reasons including: teacher strikes, student strikes, teachers striking to support the students and vice versa, not having a teacher, class cancelled for a service project to which the teacher didn't show up, and a week off for AIDS awareness week during which no activities were held. These cancellations were also not predictable, meaning that often students would go to school only to find classes cancelled or to find some classes cancelled but not others.

Further challenges were encountered even when classes were in session. Stories of drugs being dealt by teachers, teachers requiring students to contribute money for the class water cooler as 25% of their grade, and classes being taught by unqualified teachers are just a few of the challenges that faced Finca adolescents. Measures to deal with these challenges met with little success. In particular, to deal with the lack of classes the Finca school had tried to develop supplementary enrichment work that students could do on days off. This was made incredibly difficult by the lack of consistency and unpredictability of classes, making any sustained progress difficult and leaving students feeling that this was "busy work."

Much of the frustration with the education system in Trujillo emanated from the adolescents themselves. In general, they were eager to learn, had been raised to see education as an important part of their lives, and were very motivated to succeed in school as a path to future success. The education system robbed them of that enthusiasm and left them frustrated and dejected. When the middle school opened in 2005 four adolescents were given the option of staying in their public school (which was on strike at the time) or transferring to the new middle school – all enthusiastically chose to transfer. Finally, there was no evidence to believe that this system would change in the foreseeable future.

La Ceiba

The main difference that La Ceiba offered in terms of education was that there are private schools that offer an alternative to the failed public school system. La Ceiba offered three private schools (two Catholic and one private). Before the development of Phase II in 2004, the Finca had sent three students to study at Maria Regina (one of the Catholic schools) as boarding students; thus they had developed a relationship with that school and had some knowledge about the environment in La Ceiba. Maria Regina is widely regarded as one of the best schools in Honduras and the other two schools were known to be of acceptable quality and at a very minimum had class every day.

Behavior, Community Life and Spiritual Development

Trujillo

Behavioral challenges were seen as a direct result of the issues in education and specifically a result of not having school every day or on a predictable schedule. One instance that is typical of this time period was when two students left for school at the same time. One returned an hour later reporting that class had been cancelled for the day, while the other returned at the normal hour reporting that he had been in school all day. Even when there was school the lack of discipline within the school created an environment that was nearly as susceptible to poor choices as being left alone on the street all day. There was simply no way to know where kids were or what they were doing which left Phase II program staff paralyzed in terms of taking corrective disciplinary measures.

Beyond school-related behavior challenges were the difficulties the adolescents had finding a community to be a part of. Trujillo lacked organizations and activities designed to positively engage adolescents. There were no scout troops, clubs, community centers, or even

activities organized by the church. Finca kids had tried to become involved in teaching Sunday school for younger children only to be foiled by a complete lack of organization of the program. During their two years in Trujillo the adolescents had experienced the absence of an active church, school and home life. They consistently returned to the Finca needy (emotionally, physically and spiritually). This need left the adolescents feeling out of place both in Trujillo and on the Finca and inhibited their ability to enter into true community.

La Ceiba

While simply going to school every day would not be a panacea for the behavioral problems of adolescents, it would go a long way toward making those problems manageable from a programmatic point of view. Furthermore, La Ceiba offered activities and clubs designed for adolescents as well as active church youth groups. These benefits were balanced by the realities of living in a large city. As a big city, the problems were also amplified in terms of crime, drugs, commercialization, and difficult moral decisions.

Preparing for Future Employment

A primary goal of the transition from adolescence to adulthood is to prepare children to effectively support themselves and their potential families. Beyond formal education, students sought opportunities for work experience through after school jobs or during winter break. Additionally, the Finca was considering what sort of job training was available for students who were not inclined to pursue high school as well as the potential for employment for kids once they graduated from either high school or vocational training after graduation.

Trujillo

There was a disconnect between what the schools and vocational programs prepared students for and the economic realities. In February 2006, 1900 unemployed primary school teachers

(several hundred of them 2005 graduates of the local teacher training program) applied for 23 new positions in the Department of Colón. The Trujillo government vocational program was completely structured around preparing the local population to work the service sector jobs created by the forecasted tourism “boom.” They offered classes in bartending, cooking, hospitality, and “carpentry” to make trinkets and other crafts to sell to tourists. There was a disconnect between the jobs that graduates were trained for and the jobs that existed. This was primarily because Trujillo offered so little in terms of employment prospects. There was no industry or manufacturing. The winter jobs that the adolescents could find were low paying jobs in retail that did little to teach them real transferable skills and often reinforced bad habits. Tourism potential existed but there was little actual tourism. Employment prospects were very limited.

La Ceiba

La Ceiba offered a wider array of educational, vocational and employment options that would give the Finca the chance to find a niche for the adolescents as they each carved out their individual life plans. There was a sense that to be employable it was inevitable that Finca kids would eventually move to the bigger cities in Honduras. Trujillo simply did not hold the prospect of a stable employment future. This made moving Phase II to La Ceiba a wise decision because it would allow the Finca to be present in La Ceiba to begin building connections and networks for other Finca kids to use when getting their start. Furthermore, La Ceiba offered greater potential for employment.

Going Mojado

“Mojado,” literally “wet,” is the term used in Honduras for illegally immigrating to the U.S. In relation to the mission of the Finca there was a great deal of discussion about how to deal with

the prospect of Finca graduates going to the U.S. Most believed that creating a “productive society” referred to a productive “Honduran” society and that it was part of the mission to encourage Finca kids to have pride in and remain committed to Honduras.

This element is difficult to quantify in an analytic sense nor was there general agreement about which option for Phase II would be more successful in preventing Finca graduates from emigrating. One factor discussed was whether sending the adolescents to private schools sheltered them from the “real” Honduras and that moving them to La Ceiba would create unrealistic expectations that could not be met and push them towards emigration. The counter argument was that by virtue of how the Finca was run those expectations had already been created and the best way to prevent them from emigrating was to provide them with the education and employment opportunities that would encourage them to remain in Honduras.

What the Adolescents Wanted

Efforts were made to include the voice of the adolescents themselves in the discussions without raising expectations of a move that might not occur or causing undue stress. The result of those conversations was a consensus that moving to La Ceiba offered them better opportunities. They articulated many of the benefits listed above and took into consideration many of the costs listed below.

Costs

In making this decision there were several costs to consider. Since Phase II in Trujillo was the status quo there would have been no additional costs associated with that option. The costs involved in moving the program to La Ceiba are outlined below.

Financial Costs

La Ceiba represented substantially higher financial costs. This was due primarily to the higher cost of living, the addition of private school tuition (the adolescents had previously attended public school), transportation (both within La Ceiba and between La Ceiba and the Finca) and communication costs to maintain contact between the two sites. Additionally, the houses in Trujillo offered significant savings beyond cost of living differences because one of the houses was donated rent-free by a benefactor and the other was only half-way through a two-year lease. Moving to La Ceiba would entail losing the subsidy on one house and being saddled with the one year that was left on the lease of the second house. In the end the costs in La Ceiba would amount to at least double or triple the costs in Trujillo. This was significant given ballooning costs for the project as a whole, but was somewhat mitigated by the projected ease of raising funds for the increased costs. For example, high school tuition usually appeals to the type of donor that typically contributes to the Finca.

Family

Many of the children who live on the Finca have siblings who also live on the Finca. One consideration for Phase II was how to encourage strong relationships between siblings while in different physical locations. In addition, the hope had been that even when kids were not related by blood that there would be a connection forged between Finca kids that instilled a sense of family between them. This is important for both the short term sense of family that the Finca strives to produce, but also reflects the hopes for building a long term network of support. The idea is that as Finca kids become successful independent adults they will in turn become a resource for future Finca kids.

The initial move to Trujillo produced a difficult break in the relationship between siblings. During 2004 this was identified as a major challenge and efforts were put in place to encourage more productive contact between Phase II and Phase I. This included weekly dinners, weekly visits back to the Finca for adolescents, overnight visits and other opportunities for contact between siblings. It also provided an opportunity for preparing younger children for the transition to Phase II as they approached the move.

Family contact presented a great challenge in La Ceiba with distance, difficulty of travel, and expense all representing major factors. The effect on family relationships was considered a significant negative consequence of moving Phase II to La Ceiba.

Cost to the City of Trujillo

The Finca is one of the most stable, influential organizations in Trujillo. If Phase II remained in Trujillo the Finca would have the incentive to work to improve the educational, social, and economic outlook for the city. Moving Phase II to La Ceiba would remove much of the urgent nature for doing so and those concerns would become less of a priority. This represented a cost to the city of Trujillo if an influential member of the community focused its attention elsewhere.

Similarly, the Diocese of Trujillo and the Diocese of Dallas, Texas had been working together on Catholic education projects, mostly with Dallas supporting Catholic primary schools. There had been some very preliminary talk of opening a private Catholic high school in the Trujillo diocese, but this had been based mostly on Finca representatives pushing the idea with both dioceses. Any possibility for a high school was at least five years off, but again without the Finca both pushing the project and involved as educational professionals there was much less chance of anything happening.

Cost to the New Middle School and Organizational Pipeline

The opening of a new middle school on the Finca in 2005 represented a significant investment both in capital and operational costs. A new building had been built for the middle school at a cost of \$50,000 and the middle school employed 5 teachers. Moving Phase II to La Ceiba would invoke an initial drain on the school population with 4 students moving to La Ceiba who would have attended the Finca middle school. This was a significant number given that total enrollment was only 19 in 2006. While this was not a direct cost, it did mean that resources dedicated to the middle school would be used to educate fewer students than they would if Phase II remained in Trujillo. Add that to the cost of private school tuition and the Finca would essentially be paying twice to educate those students.

Moving Phase II to La Ceiba would also reduce the flexibility of moving kids between houses on the Finca and make the decision of when to transition kids to Phase II much more rigid. This was especially challenging with kids who were not on grade level for their age. In essence, the choice would become whether to move kids to La Ceiba at an older age and allow them to first graduate from 9th grade on the Finca, or transition them earlier and decrease the population (and thus the efficiency) of the school.

Risks

Leadership Structure

The primary risk associated with moving Phase II to La Ceiba was the risk that the leadership structure and personnel were not equipped to handle a second site so far away. There had been challenges in managing Phase II in Trujillo and there was great concern that the leadership style of the director would not permit the flexibility necessary to operate at such distance with limited communication. Similarly, there was concern about maintaining a unity of

purpose, mission, and approach, and that Phase II staff would not be able to maintain that without regular contact with Direction. It was very clear that all involved desired to make sure that Phase I and II were two phases of a single unified project and not two separate projects.

This is placed in the category of risk because there was a deep knowledge of the personnel involved and some sense of the challenges that could arise based on experience from Phase II in Trujillo. The one element that extended into the realm of uncertainty was the impending change of director. The current director's term would be up in December 2006 and there was a chance that she would be replaced at that time. If she was not replaced then, she would almost certainly be replaced in December 2007. That uncertainty surrounding the next director generated further concern about Direction's ability to manage two sites so distant from each other.

Uncertainties

Staff

Similar to the concern about who would be the next director of the Finca were uncertainties related to the staffing of Phase II. Since the inception of Phase II there had been difficulties finding both American volunteers and Honduran staff suited for those live-in positions. A variety of tactics had been tried in finding a good match, but because of the high turnover experienced by Honduran staff and the two-year (possibly three-year) commitment of American volunteers long-term leadership for Phase II would be an issue, which became even more acute with Phase II in La Ceiba with reduced oversight and greater independence.

Actions of Adolescents

At times, there is nothing more uncertain than the actions of young men and women. As any parent knows, no matter how well you raise a child there is no guarantee that they will

always make good choices. That said, it would open the organization to increased criticism should a tragedy occur. Pregnancy, drug abuse, crime, gang affiliation, and a variety of other tragic occurrences are risks that every teenager faces. Moving Phase II to La Ceiba would not increase that uncertainty in relation to Phase II in Trujillo, and in fact it arguably would reduce it based on the educational and support systems that would improve with the move. It would however increase the exposure of the Finca in the event of a tragedy and open it to criticism for a lack of perceived supervision.

Phase II Recommendation

The result of this decision making process was that program staff recommended that Phase II move to La Ceiba in January 2007.¹⁴ As a participant in that process I can attest that while we did not explicitly use the criteria for mission effectiveness that I have elaborated above, we did maintain the mission statement of the Finca at the forefront of every discussion of this decision. There was an implicit ranking of the importance or weight of each element of in terms of effectiveness, cost, risk and uncertainty.

The clarity and usefulness of the mission statement gave us a guide for how to approach this problem. It told us that community life and preparation for a “productive society” were top priorities and thus education, behavior and what La Ceiba offered the adolescents in terms of community and future employment should be heavily considered. It also told us that moving the adolescents far from their families (both biological and adoptive) was a serious challenge that should not be taken lightly. It forced us to grapple with how we were addressing the issue of emigration to the U.S. and how we could best prepare the children to be productive members of *Honduran* society. It told us that while moving Phase II to La Ceiba might impact Trujillo, our

¹⁴ The school year in Honduras begins on or about February 1st and runs through early November. Thus a January move would be in line with the school year.

first priority as an orphanage (not a community development organization) was to the children of the Finca. It told us that leadership, staffing and logistical challenges were substantial and not overlooked in planning a move to La Ceiba. Finally, the mission statement told us that financial costs, while important, should not be the driving factor of the decision.

Direction and Board Approval of the Proposal

The above analysis was written from the perspective of the staff that developed the proposal. This section describes the decision making process as it played out at the level of direction and the board of directors. As part of the interviews conducted for section 2 of this project, board members and the three members of the direction team who led the Finca at the time of the decision were asked to reflect on how the decision was made at the board level. Additional information was drawn from the board meeting notes provided by the Finca board of directors.

One interesting perspective on the decision making process emerged during my interviews with the three members of Direction. When I asked whether the staff, direction, and board used the same criteria in deciding to write, propose and approve the Phase II move, one member of direction responded that the staff had written the proposal from the same perspective as the board had approved the proposal but that direction had made the decision for a very different reason. While the board and the staff begin with the starting point of “What is our vision for kids when they are 30?”, direction was responding to immediate staffing challenges, an unplanned pregnancy in the girls house, and just a general sense that the program was in immediate crisis. Direction made the decision to send the staff’s proposal to the board very late and by then a significant amount of momentum had built up among the staff and in particular among the volunteers. This member of direction felt that direction was reactive and responded to

either a crisis or to a staff-generated vision for the project rather than leading a process with mission-effectiveness as the core criterion.

Board discussion of the Phase II proposal took place at the June 2006 board meeting. Prior to the meeting all board members were sent the Phase II proposal and supporting documents to review.¹⁵ The decision making process did not begin with the proposal, but rather began with a brainstorming session on “How do we want our kids to be?”¹⁶ This question was posed to the board members in an explicit attempt to ground the conversation in the mission statement and strategic plan of the organization by using them as a springboard to articulate what a child would like after leaving the Finca. There was then a discussion of the realities of Honduran life led by Zulena Pescatore, the founder of the orphanage.

With a collective vision for the children placed in the context of the reality of life in Honduras, the board then considered the proposal submitted by the Finca staff. Board members’ accounts of the conversation indicated unanimously that the decision was a very easy one. One board member remarked that the more difficult decision had come in 2003 when the Finca decided to begin Phase II in Trujillo and that the decision to move Phase II from Trujillo to La Ceiba was much easier because it was so clear that the goals established for Phase II were not possible in its current location. Another board member remarked that in 2003 the original proposal had been to start Phase II in La Ceiba, and that the primary reasons for not doing so then had been issues of logistical challenges and a perceived lack of organizational capacity. Three years of experience with Phase II located in Trujillo had built capacity to the point where the board and staff felt comfortable overcoming the challenges presented by a lack of proximity.

¹⁵ See Appendix B for a copy of the proposal.

¹⁶ Farm of the Child USA, Board Meeting Notes, Meeting of June 2006.

The board felt that the proposal from the Finca accurately captured the vision for children as well as addressed the logistical and capacity issues that success depended on. The remainder of the meeting was dedicated to discussing the various programmatic and staffing details that would go into the program. These details centered less on the decision to move to La Ceiba and more on fine tuning the Phase II program in its entirety. Following these conversations the board unanimously approved a motion to move Phase II to La Ceiba.¹⁷ All board members interviewed felt this decision indeed represented a further development of the Finca's original mission.

¹⁷ Farm of the Child USA, Minutes of Board Meeting, Meeting of June 2006.

IV. Employee Perception of Mission and Decision Making

Using the Finca del Niño as a case study this project sought to investigate four primary questions. How are the mission and vision and goals of an NGO perceived by staff and board members of an organization? How do those perceptions resemble or differ from the stated mission and vision of the organization? Is there perceived agreement among the staff, particularly across divisions such as role or nationality? How do those perceptions influence decision making?

From interviews with Finca employees a picture emerged of an organization with a very broadly shared understanding of its mission whose employees feel that their coworkers share their understanding of mission and vision. This unity and agreement is felt across a staff that is multi-cultural, multi-lingual, geographically diverse, and spans a wide socio-economic range. The case study of the Phase II decision-making process demonstrated how this unity and agreement influenced decision making in a specific programmatic decision.

Recommendations for the Finca del Niño

The Finca del Niño is remarkable because the employees demonstrate broad unity in the way that they articulate the mission of the organization and in that they perceive that there is broad agreement among the various different constituencies that make up the staff. Based on this foundation the results of the interview point to further conversations that should be had within the organization. Topics for these conversations include indicators for success of the mission, the mechanics of how mission is transmitted within the organization, the impact of turnover on community and how the unity of mission and vision can be maintained as a new leadership structure is put into place in Fall 2008.

1. Indicators of success.

- a. The disparity between board members and employees in Honduras about whether the first graduates of the Finca indicate success in the mission suggest that further discussion is needed about what constitutes success in the mission. Because of the nature of the organization as an orphanage one possibility for reflection is to consider the role of parents in raising children. What is the experience of parents raising their children when they do not turn out exactly how you had envisioned them? How does an organization emulate the reflection of parents? As parents themselves, house parents may offer a rich view on this subject and be able to significantly contribute to further the organization's thinking on what success is both organizationally and de facto parents to children who have their own free will.
- b. That nearly all those interviewed considered it an important part of the mission for Finca graduates to remain in Honduras is an interesting result that merits further reflection. How did this come to be part of the generally accepted view of what the Finca should be striving for? Is it something that should be included in the formal mission statement?

2. Mechanics of how mission is transmitted. While the interviews yielded a wealth of information about the articulation and perception of mission at the Finca del Niño they were not able to identify causal relationships that explained how that unity evolved. For example, a workshop on the mission had been given to all employees in Honduras just a few weeks prior to the interviews but when asked to express where they learned about the mission none of those interviewed even spoke about the workshop. This inquiry is

perhaps something that can best be accomplished through conversations within the organization about how employees' sense of mission evolves during their time of employment and how the organization can best support that process.

3. Impact of turnover on community. Most of the employees interviewed identified turnover as a significant challenge that could prevent the Finca from achieving its mission. Beyond simply identifying it as a challenge, several commented on how it made for difficulties in building community among Finca employees. This is relevant because while the current staff demonstrates significant agreement and a perception of unity on mission and vision, turnover could drastically alter that status in a year or two. Turnover is an ever present issue that is often discussed within the Finca, so this recommendation is designed to highlight the impact that turnover may have on perception of the mission over time.
4. Implications for New Director. The hiring of a new director in Fall 2008 presents opportunities to further strengthen the leadership's role in guiding the mission of the organization. Given the current decentralized nature of mission perception, a shift in leadership could upset that balance if proper consideration is not given to how a shift in the leadership structure may change the mechanics of how and by whom mission and vision is communicated. Three groups will be particularly important to consider:
 - a. The role of the board and any shift in the board's role in relation to the new director will be an important consideration.
 - b. The role of the nuns will change as they move out of a leadership role and into a role more defined as support. They will still represent an important source of

continuity, and consideration should be given to how to ensure they maintain an important role in the mission and vision of the Finca.

- c. The American volunteers will also likely undergo a shift in their role, particularly in that department leadership positions once occupied by volunteers will likely shift to Honduran employees under the new structure. Careful consideration should be given as to how this will affect both the volunteers' contribution to the mission and vision of the Finca and their perception of unity with other employees.

Lessons learned for the NPO/NGO community

In addition to lessons for the Finca del Niño, this research contains lessons for the broader non-profit and NGO community. This research suggests that employee perception must be added as a structural precondition for a mission statement to be successful in guiding an organization. A well-conceived and articulated mission statement is useless unless it is accompanied by accurate and broad-based absorption by an organization's employees.

This new framework takes the traditional definition of a clearly defined and articulated mission statement and adds employee perception in two ways. First, employees must be able to articulate the central elements of the mission. It is expected that there will be some variation in depth, sophistication and priority given to each of the elements of an organizations mission, but the employees must be able to articulate why the organization exists, how it seeks to achieve its mission and what is the work that is to be done. If there is a unified perception of what the mission is then each individual will be implicitly working toward that broader mission regardless of their functional responsibilities within the organization. It allows agency mission, as manifest

in its boundary, evaluative, and inspirational capacities, to operate on an individual level rather than simply on an organizational level.

The second way in which employee perception is added to this framework is that there must be a perception of unity among employees. The first criterion suggested that employees must agree with the mission statement and by extension with each other. This criterion suggests that they need to *feel* like they agree with each other. The reason that this factor is important is because it focuses discussion on areas of contention. Disagreements are inevitable within organizations and can be particularly volatile within non-profits because they are not disagreements about profit, but rather about people, ideas and essentially how to do good in the world. The perception of unity in mission determines the tone of this conversation. If there is a perceived lack of unity around the mission of the organization then the disagreements are about the fundamental question of why the organization exists and what its purpose is. If, on the other hand, there is a perception of unity then the conversation will center on questions of practical implementation and the best route to achieving a common mission and vision. These are two very different conversations.

Given the above explication of the new components here are revised criteria for evaluating the quality of a mission statement.

1. Clearly conceived and articulated mission statement.
2. Employees are able to articulate that mission in a way that is consistent with its fundamental components.
3. Employees feel that their perception of the mission is shared by a majority of other employees in the organization.

Each of these three components are preconditions for the next and must be achieved sequentially.

For example, if employees feel that their perception of the mission is broadly held, but indeed there are broad differences in the actual perceptions then this is not a healthy situation for the

organization. Similarly, if employees are able to articulate the mission accurately, but if the mission is poorly conceived then no amount of articulation will make it effective.

Adding employee perception to the framework for an effective mission statement does not eliminate the need for an effective strategic planning process that seeks to operationalize the mission. It supplements and extends that strategic planning process and demonstrates the role that individual employees play in a successful mission-driven organization. As such mission perception is not something that we *can* do to ensure a successful non-profit but rather something that we *must* do. A unified perception of mission and a perception of unity surrounding mission allow that mission to effectively motivate, draw boundaries and evaluate the success of the organization.

The most telling effect comes in the way that employee perception of mission has the ability to influence decision-making. This was seen in the case of the Finca del Niño decision making process for Phase II. This emphasis on employee perception emphasizes the way that organizational decisions are made by individual employees or groups of individual employees. This framework presents a way for us to understand the ways in which individual employees utilize the concept of mission and interact with it in a dynamic environment. It extends the level of analysis to include both an organizational lens and an individual lens. In this way, the case study of the Finca del Niño allows us to understand the ways in which employee perception of mission enhance and facilitate mission effectiveness in a non-profit organization.

Appendix A: Interview Scripts

Interview Script Finca del Nino Interviews - February 2008

Oral Consent: The purpose of this study is to understand the experience of working at the Finca del Niño and the mission of the Finca. The study is being conducted through a series of individual interviews with employees and board members of the Finca. If you agree to participate in the study I will ask you several questions about the Finca, your experiences here and the mission of the Finca. This interview will be kept confidential and while I will be writing about the results of these interviews I will not use your name in reporting the results of this study. Participation in this interview is voluntary and there are no consequences if you choose not to participate. You can ask to stop the interview at any time and ask that your responses not be used. Do you have any questions? I will now give you 15 minutes to decide if you'd like to participate. Do you agree to participate in the study? If they agree: If you want to contact me after the interview, you can reach me at the volunteer house at the Finca del Niño.

Interview Questions:

1. How did you hear about the Finca?
 - a. Tell me about the application and hiring process for coming to work at the Finca.
 - b. Why did you want to work for the Finca?
 - c. Did the reason you wanted to work here bear out?
2. Can you think of an example of a major or important situation or decision you have faced since coming to the Finca?
 - a. Who or what helped you in deciding what to do?
 - b. Did the mission influence that?
3. In your own words please tell me: What is the mission of the Finca del Niño?
4. How do you see the mission of Finca del Niño put into practice on a daily basis?
5. How does the concept of community contribute to the mission of the Finca del Niño?
6. What is the simplest way to describe the work of the Finca del Niño? Do you think this simple message is conveyed?
7. Describe the type of society that would be created if the work of the Finca del Niño were successful.
8. How did you learn about the mission of the Finca del Niño?
 - a. How is it reinforced?
 - b. Describe the way others members of the Finca view the mission? Who sees it differently or the same?
9. What are the challenges to the mission, how might this mission fail? How can this be overcome?

Interview Script
Finca del Nino Entrevistas - February 2008

Oral Consent:

El presupuesto de esta investigación es comprender la experiencia de trabajar en la Finca del Nino y la misión de la Finca. Esta investigación se pasa por medio de entrevistas individuales con empleados y miembros de la junta directiva de la Finca del Niño. Si usted esta de acuerdo con participar en la investigación, le voy a hacer algunas preguntas sobre la Finca, sus experiencias aquí y la misión de la Finca. Voy a guardar la entrevista como confidencial y aunque voy a escribir sobre estos resultados no voy a poner su nombre con los resultados de esta investigación. Su participación en esta investigación es con su voluntad, y no hay ninguna consecuencia si decide a no participar. Puede decidir terminar la entrevista en cualquier momento y pedir que sus respuestas no estén incluidas. ¿Tiene una pregunta? Le voy a dar 15 minutos para decidir si quiere participar. ¿Esta de acuerdo con participar en la investigación? If they agree: Si quiere contactarme después de la entrevista, me puede encontrar en la casa de los voluntarios aquí en la finca del niño.

Preguntas de entrevista:

1s. ¿Como conoció a la Finca?

- a. Cuénteme sobre la entrevista e el proceso de venir a trabajar en la finca.
- b. ¿Porque quería trabajar en la finca?
- c. ¿Es la realidad de la vida en la Finca similar a /de acuerdo con sus expectativas?

2s. ¿Me puede dar un ejemplo de una situación o decisión importante que ha visto en su tiempo aquí?

- d. ¿Quien o qué le ayudó en decidir que hacer?
- e. ¿Le influyó la misión?

3s. En sus propias palabras, dígame: ¿Que es la razón de estar de la Finca del niño?

4s. ¿Como ve la misión en el trabajo diario de la Finca?

5s. ¿Como contribuye a la misión de la Finca el concepto de comunidad?

6s. ¿Que es la manera mas sencilla para describir el trabajo de la Finca? ¿Piensa que se transmite este mensaje sencillo?

7s. Descríbeme la sociedad que resultara si el trabajo de la Finca fuera un éxito

8s. ¿Como conoció a la misión de la Finca?

- f. ¿Como se re-esfuerza?
- g. Descríbeme como los demás de la Finca comprende la misión. ¿Quien lo ve en una manera similar? ¿Una manera diferente?

9s. ¿Que son los desafíos a la misión; como puede esta misión fallar? ¿Como alcanzan sobre estos desafíos?

Appendix B: Phase II Proposal

Phase II in La Ceiba
Reunión de la Junta de los EUA 2006
Finca del Niño

En gratitud por el gran amor que Jesucristo nos da, decidimos unirnos a formar una COMUNIDAD para cuidar de niños necesitados y promover el desarrollo de una SOCIEDAD PRODUCTIVA de DEVOTOS CRISTIANOS.

Objective:

To improve upon the ongoing work in the Trujillo Phase II houses by moving them to La Ceiba.

Rationale:

The rationale for a Phase II move to La Ceiba is centered on the desire to live the four pillars of the Farm in our adolescent program. This proposal focuses on the educational and vocational needs of our children and demonstrates how, by meeting those educational needs, we can fulfill the mission of the Farm in the other three pillars.

Service—Educational/Vocational

To prepare our children for lives of service we must...

1. Identify fulfilling, productive careers for our children.
2. Prepare them to serve in those careers through education and vocational training.
3. Help them begin their professional lives in those careers.
4. Concurrently with the first three, we must instill in them a desire to use their talents and vocations to live in service to others.

Through our formational efforts in Phase I and Phase II we are succeeding in raising adolescents whose desire is to live for others. Unfortunately that desire is destined to go unfulfilled because in Trujillo we have failed thus far on the first two goals and have no realistic prospect for fulfilling the third. The economy of Trujillo does not provide the types of careers that will enable our children to be productive members of Honduran society. The educational system in Trujillo is dysfunctional such that it impedes our ability to educate our children to a basic level, let alone to the standards that have been set by our Finca schools.

Furthermore, there is a disconnect between what the schools and vocational programs prepare students for and the economic reality that exists. This February, 1900 unemployed primary school teachers (several hundred of them 2005 graduates of Normal Mixta) applied for 23 new positions in the Department of Colón. The Trujillo INFOP vocational program is completely structured around preparing the local population to work the service sector jobs created by the forecasted tourism “boom.” They offer classes in bartending, cooking, hospitality, and “carpentry” to make trinkets and other

crafts to sell to tourists. Trujillo as a whole is not accomplishing the first two goals and has no immediate prospect for doing so.

By moving to La Ceiba we have the possibility of fulfilling these four goals. A wider array of educational, vocational and employment options give us the chance to find a niche for our children as they each carve out their individual life plans. Our children want to live lives of service to support of their siblings, their biological families and their other Finca children. La Ceiba provides adequate educational resources and the possibility of a stable, meaningful career built on that education. By moving to La Ceiba we cannot ensure that every child will succeed but we can prepare them for success, a success that is embodied as a productive member of Honduran Society.

Community—Socio/Emotional

The search for a community is ultimately a search for place. We must help our children find a place where they are ready and capable of entering into the relationships that build community.

To do this our children must enter society comfortable in the knowledge of who they are, proud of where they came from, and confident in of what they have to offer their new community. Phase I and II have accomplished the first two goals. In moving to La Ceiba we can provide our children with skills and resources to enter into their new adult community with something to offer to build that community, thus giving them the best chance at a stable emotional transition to independent living and giving the community a solid community member on which to build.

Current experiences in Trujillo illustrate this point. In two years in Trujillo our adolescents have felt the absence of an active church, school and home life. They have consistently returned to the Farm needy (emotionally, physically and spiritually). This need leaves our adolescents feeling out of place both in Trujillo and on the Farm, inhibiting their ability to enter into true community.

By moving Phase II to La Ceiba we allow our children to enter into community from the sense of fulfillment and place that comes from being on an educational, vocational, or career track.

The distance from the Farm implicit in the Ceiba proposal cuts both ways. It diminishes the quantity of contact between Phase I and II children but it makes that contact more intentional and fruitful when it grows out of a healthy sense of place. It also prepares for more fruitful community life in the future as the first wave of Farm graduates are set to form stable building blocks for their younger brother and sister.

Spirituality—Spirituality

Guiding someone through a spiritual journey from childhood to devout Christian is difficult at best. The transition from a childhood spirituality to an adult alive in their faith involves a shift on the part of the Farm from teaching to accompaniment as our children become adults. In order to find peace as an organization we must be confident in the

preparation we have given them and in the system of support we have helped them build to continue to walk with them in their life-long journey of faith. We can and should be confident in the preparation our children receive while with the Farm. What we have found severely lacking in Trujillo is a vibrant local church where our children can continue to walk in their faith.

In La Ceiba our adolescents can find vibrant parishes with active youth groups with liturgical lives. Each child will naturally turn outward from the Farm to find accompaniment in their spiritual journey and in La Ceiba we can position them to find it in the local Catholic community.

Simplicity—Biophysical

Moving Phase II we offer our adolescents viable educational and career options and ensure their ability to maintain a consistent standard of living into their future. Simplicity will be a large challenge for all involved in a La Ceiba adolescent program, but it is one that mirrors the challenge our adolescents will face in their independent lives and one we must confront at some point.

As we move from Phase I to Phase II (and ultimately Phase III) the emphasis moves from meeting needs to the internalization of simplicity. Implicit in the push for our children to be productive members of Honduran society is their ability to enter the middle class and its exposure to the comforts of that life. In La Ceiba we can accompany them in making those critical choices of simplicity as they confront them more fully than we can in Trujillo.

Proposed Solution

Move the Phase II adolescent houses from Trujillo to La Ceiba.

Priority/Timeline

Priority – High

Timeline – La Ceiba houses open in January 2007.

Budget/Resources

See attached budget and staffing plan.