CREFAL: TRAINING CENTRE FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOR LATIN AMERICA

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History of CREFAL

The Regional Fundamental Education Centre for Community Development in Latin America was inaugurated at Pátzcuaro, Michoacan, Mexico, on 9 May 1951. The Organization of American States, the Government of Mexico, the United Nations and some of its Specialized Agencies (International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization and World Health Organization) joined together under the leadership of Unesco to plan and support this new institution because all of these organizations, as they took their first steps towards the development of technical assistance programmes, encountered a need for trained directorial and supervisory staff for rural and community development programmes.

At its fourth session in Florence, Italy, in 1949, the General Conference of Unesco authorized the Director General to co-operate with Member States, the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies in the establishment of regional centres to train teachers and leaders for fundamental education, to produce educational materials for rural development activities and to carry out field research. In response to this resolution, the Government of Mexico on 3 October 1949 requested that the first centre be established within its territory and offered to provide the land, buildings, furniture, local transportation and domestic staff required for its effective functioning. The Organization of American States also expressed an interest in collaborating with CREFAL, and on 7 July 1950 signed an agreement with Unesco, providing for its participation as a full partner with Unesco. This original agreement was modified on 1 January 1954, in such a way as to limit the contribution of the OAS to the awarding of twenty study grants a year.

In 1956, an appraisal Mission composed of representatives of the UN,


2) The programme proposed at the first session of the General Conference of Unesco to help rural communities understand and solve the related problems of ignorance, superstition, communication, disease, nutrition, agricultural and handicraft production, marketing and local government.
ILO, FAO, WHO and Unesco was appointed to evaluate the work of the Centre. It recommended that the programme of CREFAL be oriented towards the training of supervisory staff for community development and the production of prototype educational materials.

In the years following 1956, the participating Organizations, have encouraged Unesco to orient the work of the Centre towards the objective of encouraging, supporting and servicing programmes of community development in Latin America, and of providing a focus for concerted interagency action in that field. Within this context, a Special Working Party was convened in Paris (11–15 January 1960) to reorient the programme and objectives of the Centre in that direction.

**Organization**

Functionally, the Centre is organized in two divisions which handle administrative and technical matters respectively, and which are jointly supervised by the Director and the Deputy Director, both of whom are members of the Secretariat of Unesco.

The Administrative Division is headed by an Administrative Officer, also a member of the Secretariat of Unesco, who is responsible for accounts, budgets, contracts, disbursements, personnel actions, purchases and the maintenance of buildings, grounds and vehicles.

The Technical Division includes two Sections: (i) the Faculty or Teaching Staff and (ii) the Office of the Secretary-Registrar. Not counting the Director and the Deputy Director, the Faculty includes thirteen consultants and specialists in adult education, adult literacy, agricultural extension, audiovisual aids, community development, co-operatives and credit, home economics, public administration, public health, recreation, rural economics, rural industries and rural sociology. These consultants and specialists are provided to the Centre by the Technical Assistance Programmes of the participating Organizations of the United Nations family, and are responsible for classroom teaching in their specialized fields as well as for the supervision of student field work. Through the Faculty Council, the teaching staff counsels and advises the Director on matters of budget and finance, personal relations, programme, publications and student discipline.

Finally, mention must be made of the Centre's Inter-Agency Committee, which includes representatives of the United Nations, ILO, FAO, Unesco, WHO and the OAS. It was established in 1956 to advise the Director on the content, methods and objectives of the training programme; to carry out continual evaluation of the work of the Centre and to maintain