



## Where to From Here? A Discussion Group on Building COMMACT's Future

Facilitator: John O'Dempsey, Australia

This session was intended to assist the COMMACT International Board to prepare a 3-5 year Strategic Plan for COMMACT International.

Firstly, the group indicated that, from what had already been achieved in launching the COMMACT International Solidarity Partnership Program that there was every reason to approach COMMACT's future from a positive and optimistic standpoint.

Major themes arose:

1. That COMMACT had the opportunity to build substantially on the Solidarity Partnership Program and to engage more partners from both "North" and "South" countries in non-colonial relationships dedicated to learning from each other, building people-to-people collaboration and helping each other to improve and extend their people-centred development efforts.
2. COMMACT should continue to develop, record and widely distribute "stories" which demonstrated best practice in the International partnership and people-centred development fields and which encouraged others to join the Program.
3. That there was an opportunity to further explore a *Financing Development Model* as demonstrated by initiatives such as the Community Sector Banking model in Australia and the Rickshaw Bank in India. The focus of such efforts would likely focus on micro-finance for the poorest of the poor and on building social enterprises;
4. That the work of COMMACT International and individual COMMACT National Chapters needs to be improved by:
  - a. Establishment of new Chapters;
  - b. Improved consultation between the COMMACT International Secretariat and individual Chapters and the COMMACT International Consultative Committee;
5. That the COMMACT International website would continue to play a key role in the development of COMMACT and that there was general agreement that the website should contain more stories, pictures and films of local people-centred development projects and that the website should be constructed to enhance interactivity.
6. That promotion of COMMACT should be a priority and ideas that could be considered include:
  - a. A Communications Strategy to spread information through like agencies and networks across the world (e.g. RIPPSS) and to encourage website links on other websites;
  - b. Use of Yahoo and other Group systems;
  - c. By utilising Viral Networking arrangements (10 people send information to 10 people who each target 10 others and so on);
7. In its Constituency building work, COMMACT should focus on:

- a. Building new Chapters;
  - b. Actively communicating and collaborating with other like networks;
8. In relation to Organisational Strengthening, a variety of ideas arose:
  - a. How can we strengthen local Chapters?
  - b. How can we strengthen the International Secretariat?
  - c. Is a separate International Secretariat a worthy aspiration?
  - d. How might additional funds be raised to meet the costs of a vibrant and effective International Secretariat?
9. What potential is there to adapt “private sector” approaches? Might COMMACT be able to develop “fair trade” networks?
10. What advocacy or lobbying role might COMMACT build – especially in relation to International Policy Development in areas associated with people-centred development?
11. In relation to financing the International Secretariat approaches might include:
  - a. Approaching the Australian Government for support;
  - b. Attracting more financial support from North country Solidarity Partners;
  - c. Examine membership fees (noting advice from the Board that this would likely to be considered from 2009);
  - d. A volunteer group would examine future financing for COMMACT International and advise the Board on possible approaches;
12. There was general agreement that COMMACT should actively cooperate with the following international networks:
  - a. CIVICUS
  - b. RIPESS
  - c. International Council on Social Welfare
  - d. Fair Trade International
13. The “magnetic North” for COMMACT – i.e. what makes COMMACT?

COMMACT should continue to focus around the work of practitioners of people-centred development, telling their stories and continuing to build Solidarity partnerships.