

"Comprender lo comprensible es un derecho humano."
(Knowledge is a human right.)

Everywhere in rural Central America, from the mountainside coffee farms in Honduras to the windswept plains of Costa Rica, one hears of the *Escuela para Todos*, the "School for Everybody." It seems that all the campesinos attend. In fact, no one "goes" to the *Escuela*, the *Escuela* comes to the people through the radio and through its yearly almanac.

On the surface, the *Escuela para Todos*—based in Costa Rica but transmitting throughout Central America—seems to be a modest research library and studio for recording tapes for radio broadcast. But it is more than that. It is a bridge from the university to the farmer in the field who wants to learn but lacks the opportunity, a program whose sole aim is to provide knowledge to people who ordinarily would not have access to it.

The *Asociación Escuela para Todos* and its mother institution, the *Instituto Centroamericano de Extensión de la Cultura* (ICECU), were the brainchildren of an Austrian named Roderich Thun and a group of Costa Ricans who wanted to narrow the cultural gaps between Central America's urban and rural populations.

After exhaustive analysis and consultation with scholars at local universities, they decided to offer Central American campesinos access to a group of experts in every field of human knowledge. They wanted a way in which the campesinos could get answers to questions about subjects that really interested them in a quick, clear and comprehensible manner. The answer proved to be radio.

The ICECU was founded in Costa Rica in 1963, and the *Asociación Escuela para Todos* shortly thereafter—to provide "an extensive, vigorous fundamental education program for all on the Central American isthmus."

Although *Escuela para Todos* is prohibited, by law, from answering questions pertaining to political controversies, it is nevertheless vocal in its support for human rights, representative democracy and respect for the dignity of the individual.

In order to satisfy the educational needs of the rural population, the ICECU and the *Asociación* developed a three-part correspondence, radio and editorial program to disseminate knowledge and information.

The correspondence program provides written answers to questions that the campesinos mail to the station. *Escuela para Todos* answers questions concerning everything from animal husbandry and agriculture to the environment and physics. All the questions sent in by the campesinos—even those not used on the radio question-and-answer show—are answered in writing.

The station receives about 16,000 questions per year, and the *Escuela* keeps all questions and responses on file. Some individuals write as often as 40 times per year. A small room in the *Escuela* building, for example, contains loose-leaf notebooks that line the walls from floor to ceiling, with letters ranging from a farmer's question about the salinity of his soil to a child's query about why the earth is round. When the campesinos feel they cannot adequately describe an object, they have been known to mail such items to *Escuela para Todos* for identification. As a result, the *Escuela* has a vast and varied collection of artifacts ranging from pre-Colombian pottery to mutant animals.

Since October 1964, the radio program has selected some of these written questions and answers and broadcast them throughout Central America. The 30-minute radio program is currently on-the-air six days a week over more than half of the radio stations in all of Central America. In addition to its audience of three million in Central America, *Escuela para Todos* is heard in parts of Mexico and in northern Colombia.

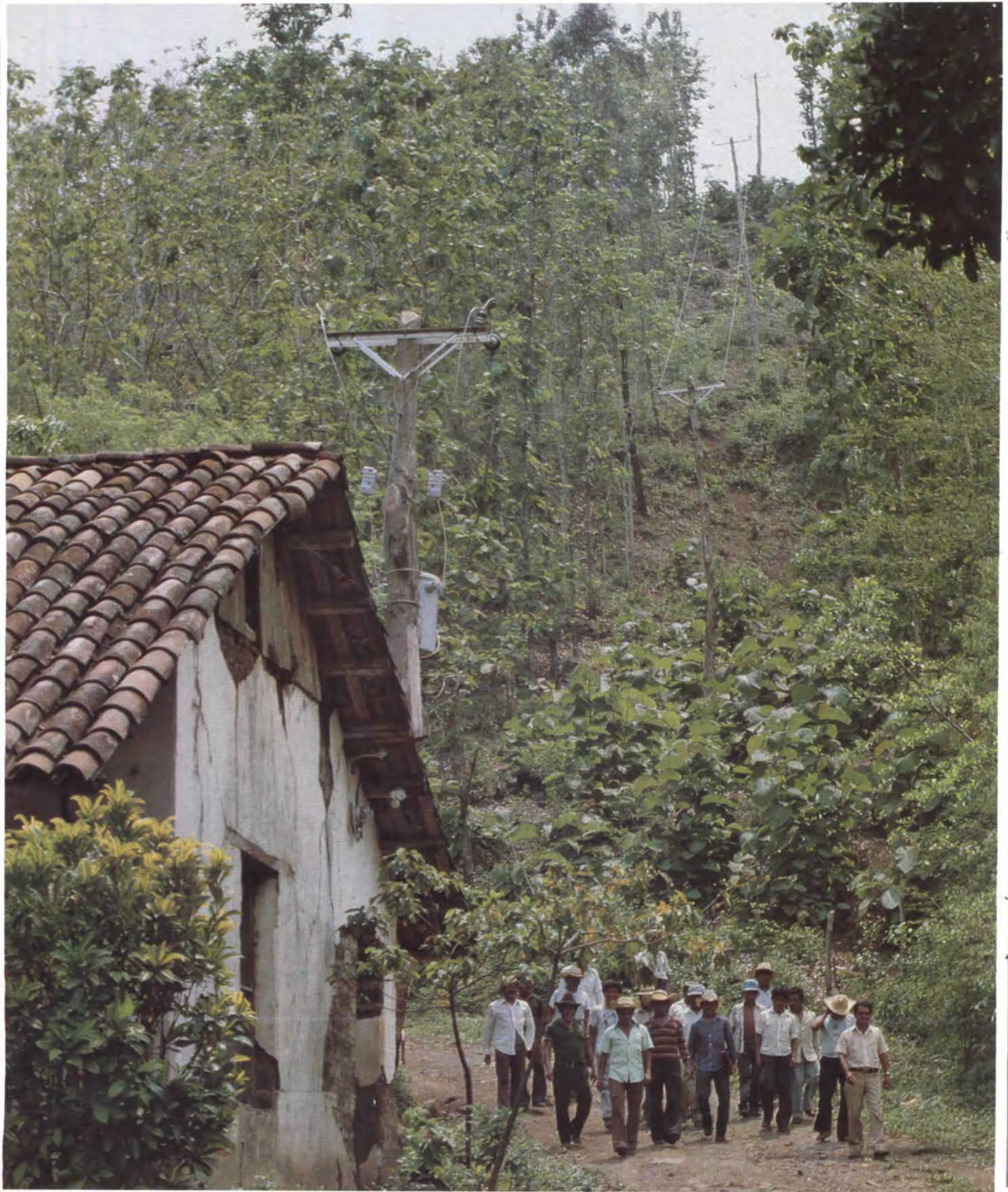
Every year the editorial program publishes an almanac based on the questions received by the *Escuela* during the previous year. The *Libro Almanaque Escuela para Todos (Escuela para Todos Free Almanac)* was published for the first time in January 1966 and since that time has been published each consecutive year, for 20 editions or a combined output of 7,026,500 volumes. Studies estimate total annual readership at more than two million.

In addition to Costa Rica itself, *Escuela para Todos* has been supported by several other Central American governments as well as by West Germany and Canada.

In 1984 cutbacks in Costa Rican government subsidies, and political unrest in the region, cut almanac sales severely, leaving the program in dire straits. AID then stepped in and provided \$1 million to help keep the program operating. Currently, AID is funding 12 to 15 percent of the *Escuela's* operating budget, and is considering a proposal to provide *Escuela para Todos* with its own broadcasting station in order to save money on the fees required for broadcasting on commercial stations. □



Escuela para Todos narrator Rafael Angel Arias Gomez and researcher Barbara Chacon tape a segment of a show that will be broadcast throughout Central America.



Nurse Marina Elena Gámez looks after children of the Copapayo cooperative in a medical clinic that was built with profits realized by the cooperative after Salvadoran land reform.



Members of the La Mosquitia sugar cooperative (facing page) walk to their fields past the school and electric power lines that the cooperative sponsors with profits it returned to the community.

Woman hauling brush (below) up a steep hillside to construct a coffee nursery at a cooperative established under the Salvadoran land reform program.



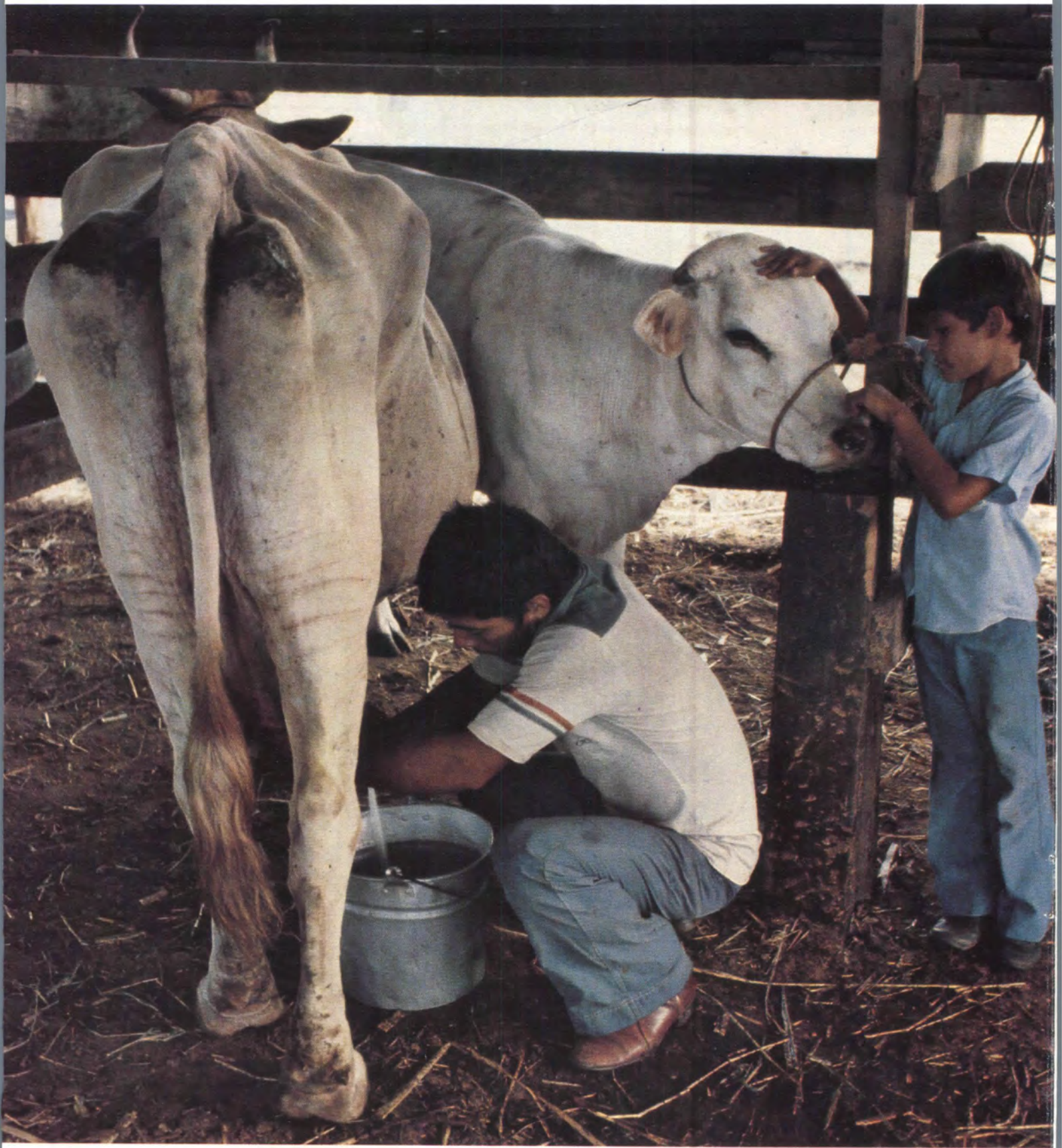
In March 1980 the Salvadoran government began a land reform program affecting roughly one-third of the country's farmland. By 1984 more than 550,000 people have benefited from the program, either individually or as members of cooperatives.

The land reform has occurred in three phases. In Phase I the government converted more than 469 large plantation farms (each in excess of 500 hectares) into 317 production cooperatives with 31,000 former farmworkers as co-owners. Phase II covers estates between 100 and 500 hectares and includes coffee-growing areas that account for a substantial portion of the country's export production. (Because of fears that expropriation could damage Salvador's export trade, Phase II was deferred until December 1983.) Phase III "Land to the Tiller" programs benefit thousands who were former renters and sharecroppers, with little prospect of owning land, by allowing them to apply for a maximum of seven hectares of the land they farmed as of May 1980. By August 1984, 63,635 families had signed up for 96,700 hectares.

The coffee cooperative at left is an example of the Phase I agrarian reform program. Having a share in the land has proved to be an incentive to the members of the cooperative to increase production and to look after their investment. The woman is working in one of nine cooperative coffee plant nurseries; these nurseries yield 113,000 new plants every year to help the cooperative grow and prosper. In addition to producing coffee, the cooperative builds housing for migrant workers and takes in displaced persons. AID helps the cooperatives acquire legal titles to the lands, compensate the former land-owners, and provide administrative support such as locating professional managers and accountants.

The sugar cane cooperatives shown here are one type of enterprise resulting from the "Land to the Tiller" program. Cooperative members have reinvested their profits in housing, schools, health clinics and other public works. The *La Mosquitia* cooperative used proceeds from farming to bring electricity to their village and establish education programs for adults and children. The clinic was funded by the *Copapayo* cooperative. AID provides management support and pays Salvadorans for the complicated legal work involved in transferring titles, land measurement and surveying.

In another example of the benefits of land reform, the Chapeton brothers bought the land they farmed under the "Land to the Tiller" program (see page 2) and switched from corn to papayas. The simple act of changing crops caused a quantum leap in both productivity and income for the family. □



Roberto Suazo's dairy farm in Honduras is one of many small dairy and cattle operations that have become "going concerns" through the programs of the Fondo Ganadero.



The satellite-fed computer system pictured here provided such useful international market information that it enabled FEPROEXAAH to arrange a deal that paid for the system (\$200,000) in about 30 seconds.



Promoting Growth

HONDURAS—

Designed to boost Honduras' cattle and dairy industry, the Fondo Ganadero buys cattle and places them with ranchers and dairy farmers to be raised as a joint venture. The Fondo also provides technical assistance to the ranchers and farmers, usually through AID contract workers. When the cattle and dairy products are sold, the ranchers or farmers keep 55 percent of the proceeds (five percent of which consist of shares in the Fondo itself), and the

Fondo receives 45 percent to run its operations and reinvest in capital and more livestock.

"Running cattle on shares" has transformed cattle and dairy farms which formerly operated on a subsistence level into income-producing operations. The Fondo Ganadero, based on a similar operation that was very successful in Colombia, obtained its operating and technical assistance funds through a combination of U.S. loans and grants.

The sources of U.S. economic assistance to developing countries are diverse and range from private voluntary organizations to a number of federal departments of the United States government, notably the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID), which coordinates U.S. foreign assistance efforts and directly administers a majority of U.S. economic assistance programs.

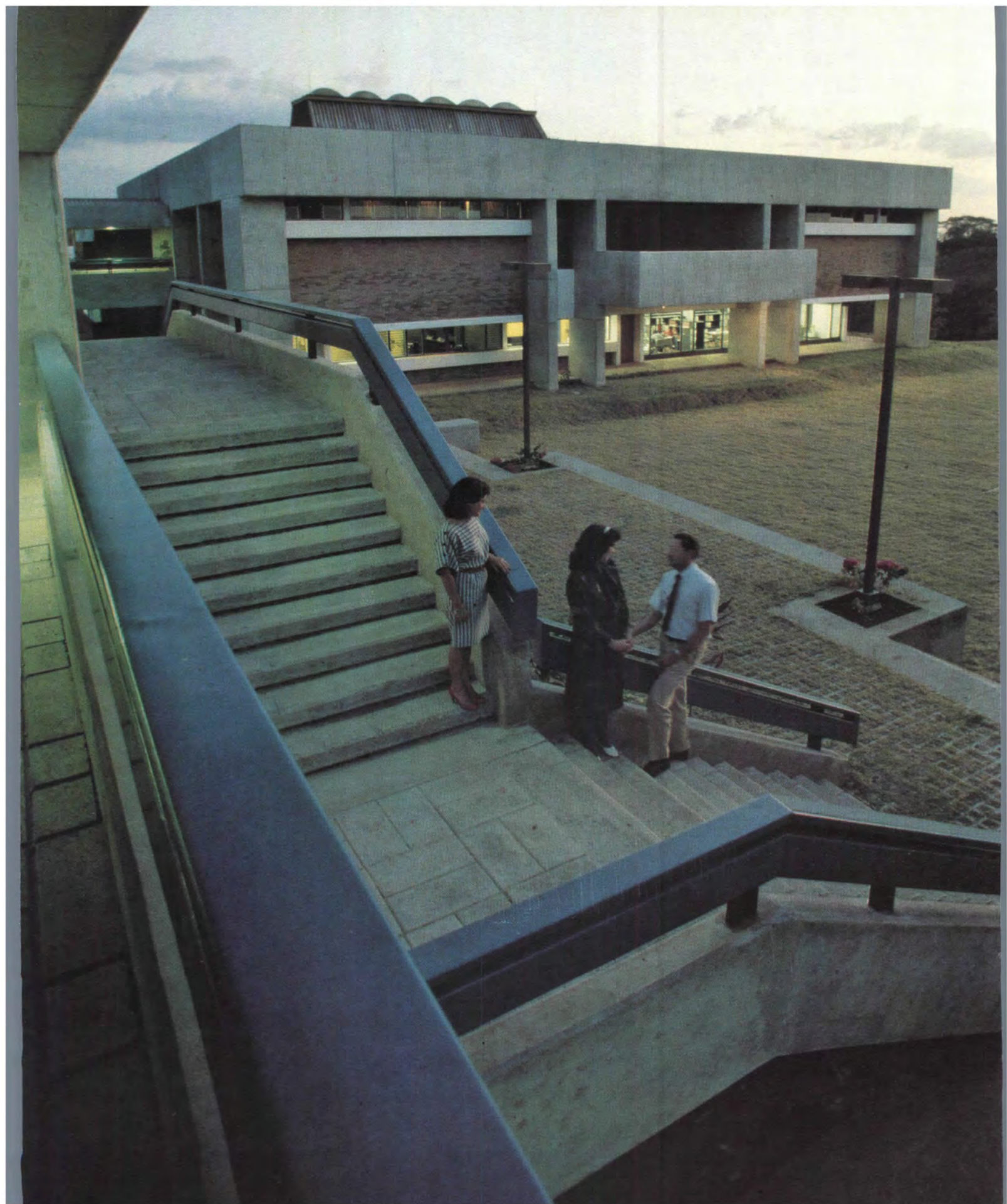
Central America, the island nations of the Caribbean and the United States share the primary goal of self-sustaining economic growth. In cooperating with the nations of the region to achieve this goal, the U.S. emphasizes four key elements in its programs of economic assistance.

One is supporting efforts at policy reform, which means eliminating practices that can inhibit long-term economic growth such as fixed prices for agricultural products so low that farmers have little incentive to increase production. High tariffs and overvalued exchange rates can also be serious impediments to growth. Instead, the United States seeks to support the efforts of governments and the private sector to expand labor-intensive production and to stimulate increased exports of new as well as traditional products from the region.

An example of this policy reform effort is FEPROEXAAH (above), a federation of Honduran agro-industrial producers and exporters, whose slogan is "AID is a partner, not a boss." Representing Honduran agribusiness associations, FEPROEXAAH promotes Honduras' agricultural and livestock exports by facilitating commercial relations between producers and buyers, promoting joint ventures with foreign investors, and providing members with technical assistance in marketing, production and quality control for the export market. AID helped FEPROEXAAH to organize and loaned it the money to get its modern, computer-based operation underway during the first two years. By April 1985 FEPROEXAAH had sold all of its projected production for 1985—in industries as varied as citrus, cattle, coffee, bananas, poultry, honey and tobacco.

Second, the United States actively encourages private enterprise throughout the region. A free economy, in the U.S. view, is the best means to achieve development. Underlying this emphasis is the recognition that the development of a strong non-government sector is critical not only for economic growth, but for the long-term preservation of civil and political rights in any society.

AID's Bureau for Private Enterprise has undertaken a variety of activities to improve the business climate in the Caribbean Basin. One year-long project trained investment advisers serving several Caribbean governments; the U.S. has also created investment centers to attract U.S. direct private sector investment to key countries in the region. Through these centers, grants have been provided to the Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce, and to local chambers of commerce and business associations. The goal is to attract investors seeking new business opportunities or wishing to enter international markets for the first time.



Another example of U.S. support for private enterprise in the region can be found in Panama where, in 1983, the U.S. provided \$3.9 million in project aid to the National Investment Council of Panama. This project encouraged 28 firms from all over the world to invest \$32 million in Panama, creating 4,000 new jobs. In 1985 seven additional firms were negotiating to participate in the program, with the potential for \$4.9 million in investment and 1,500 new jobs.

Third, schools, colleges, training organizations, capital markets, and other institutions are necessary for economic growth in developing countries. Effective institutions enhance a country's ability to marshal its own human and other resources for development, and help men and women gain access to the skills and services needed to increase their productivity and income.

One such institution, sometimes referred to as "the Harvard Business School of Central America," is the *Instituto Centroamericano de Administracion de Empresas* (INCAE), established to train Central Americans in the latest techniques in management and business administration. Students at INCAE are often professionals seeking to enhance their skills in order to help their countries' development efforts.

INCAE moved from Nicaragua to Costa Rica when operations became increasingly difficult under the Sandinistas. Forced to leave their library behind when they moved, INCAE has rebuilt its facilities outside San José with U.S. assistance, most notably a new library, new books and scholarships for INCAE students.

INCAE is one of several Central American regional institutions where AID finances research, development and service projects. Others include the Institute for Tropical Agriculture (CATIE), also based in Costa Rica, and the Institute for Nutrition (INCAP) in Guatemala.

Fourth, economic growth requires the capacity to develop and apply a continuing stream of innovations designed to increase productivity, employment and incomes, and to adapt technologies transferred from industrialized countries.

One of the few agricultural analysis and research facilities in Central America, the *Fundacion Hondureña de Investigacion Agricola* (FHIA) in Honduras uses advanced technologies to serve all the countries in the region with soil analyses and a quick growth/reproduction program that promotes accelerated development of disease-resistant strains of endangered plants. AID subsidizes 90 percent of the operations of this vital facility.

EL SALVADOR—

From 1979 to 1984, El Salvador's exports—critical to earning foreign exchange and increasing employment—fell precipitously. In response, a group of key business leaders concerned with investment promotion created FUSADES—the Salvadoran Foundation for Economic and Social Development.

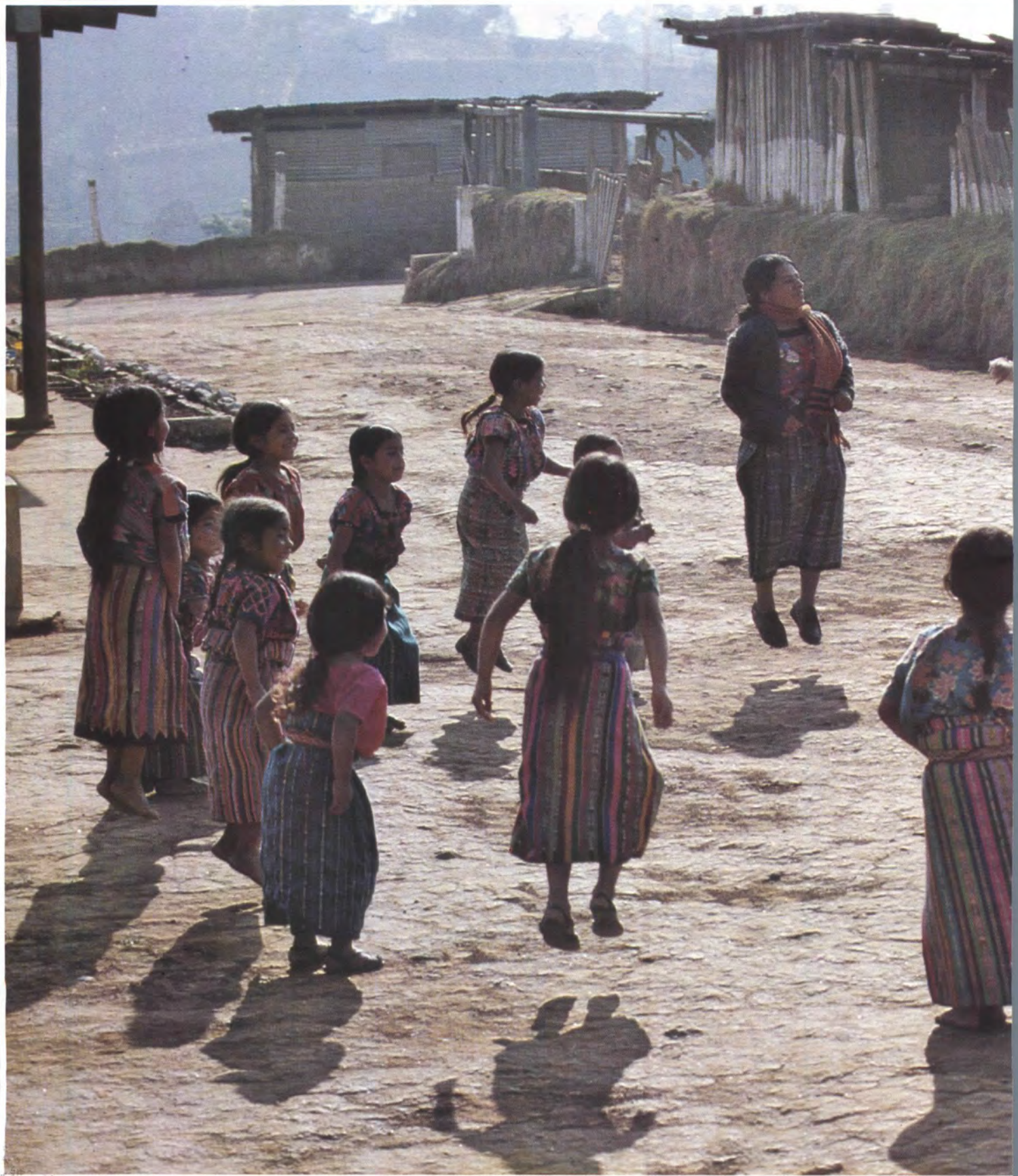
FUSADES encourages foreign businesses to invest in Salvadoran industries, matches Salvadoran companies with international sponsors for joint ventures, and sponsors international and domestic trade fairs to encourage such investment. AID is helping FUSADES with export promotion for markets outside Central America.



(Facing page) In Costa Rica, "the Harvard Business School of Central America," INCAE has a new library which was built with U.S. funds.

(Right) FHIA laboratory technician in Honduras monitors progress of pineapple sprouts in program that promotes development of disease-resistant plants.

(Far right) South Korean-backed joint venture in textiles prospers in the Salvadoran Free Zone (Zona Libre). Although such enterprises do not generate tariff revenues for El Salvador, their goal is to create 6,000 new jobs per year.





Paulina Cristal Sipac, an instructor, or *promotor bilingual*, who teaches first-year students at the *Escuela Pacorral*, is a native *Cakchiquel* speaker who supplements language instruction in her classes by teaching the children traditional Spanish songs and games.

Guatemala's Indian population, which represents 46 percent of the total national population and 67 percent of the country's overall rural population, does not speak Spanish as its native language, but rather four principal Mayan languages and 22 dialects. Without Spanish, these Indians lack the most basic communications skills necessary to take advantage of economic and social opportunities available to speakers of Spanish.

In the past, Indian students often dropped out after only two to three years of primary school because all instruction was in Spanish. Efforts in the '60s to address this problem by teaching the first year of primary school with a mix of one of the four primary Mayan languages and Spanish met with only limited success.



Students in the AID-supported bilingual education program at the Escuela Pacorral are taught to read and write in their own Indian language before learning Spanish.



The bilingual education program is designed to provide Guatemala's Indians with the basic communications skills necessary to take advantage of economic and social opportunities available to speakers of Spanish.

In the 1970s, experts realized that one year of bilingual education was not enough to get the Indian children acclimated to mainstream Spanish-language education. In cooperation with the government, the U.S. began a program in 1980 that uses the four principal Mayan languages and spreads instruction over three years. In their first year of primary school, Indian children receive about 85 percent of their instruction in their native language, 15 percent in Spanish; in the second year, 60 percent of their instruction is in the Indian language; and, by the third year, only 50 percent of their classes are in the Indian language.

Ten pilot schools are using this system in each of Guatemala's four major language zones. (In addition, 10 "comparison

schools" provide instruction in Spanish only, to gauge the effectiveness of the program.)

The first objective is to teach Indian children to read and write in their own language, and then to transfer those skills into learning Spanish. Other elements of this program include:

1. Curriculum development. The project prepares text materials in math, science and social studies in the four Indian languages. The textbooks are the first of their kind.
2. Native Indian teacher aides, *promotors bilingual*, are used to orient the children in the classroom after they have been trained in teaching methods and use of the new texts. Although these *promotors bilingual* lack the formal education of full-fledged teachers, AID is providing scholarships to help such peo-

ple get a *licenciatura*, or the equivalent of a bachelor's degree. Forty *promotors bilingual* are being sent to Washington, D.C. and the University of New Mexico for one month on AID scholarships.

3. Evaluation. By tracking student progress over the years, the pilot programs were deemed effective enough to expand the program nationally from its current total of 40 schools to 400 schools. The eventual goal is to establish the program in all of Guatemala's rural schools.

The U.S. has provided \$12 million for a six-year bilingual education program; \$8.7 million in loans and \$3.3 million in outright grants. (The government of Guatemala has provided \$31 million for the program for the same six years.) □