

The Groupman of Gros Morne:
A Small Group Approach to
Rural Development among
Haitian Peasants

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents certain preliminary observations on the functioning of the Gros Morne Project. It is based on information during a brief field visit made during December of 1982. Both authors, at different times, had been approached by Project Staff with a view to possibly carrying out a formal evaluation of the project. This visit, however, was made as a preliminary contact, not as part of the formal evaluation.

Because of the brevity of the visit, the information presented in these pages should be construed, not as definitive findings, but as "carefully analyzed impressions." And we hope in these pages to present, not an evaluation, but a listing of the many aspects of the program that a full evaluation should carefully examine.

In the first part we will present a description of the project staff and infrastructure. Following that we will give a brief history of the project. This will be followed by a description and analysis of what is the central feature of the project: the organization of small farmer groups who undertake joint economic activities. We shall talk about the functioning of these groups and about the subsidiary effects which their participation in the groupman movement appears to be having on their social and personal lives, in addition to the increases in domestic revenue from groupman economic activities.

We will then look at the three other components of the Project: the Technical Section, the Health Section, and the Education Section. Finally we will make some concluding recommendations.

We repeat the tentative nature of our findings. We are grateful to the entire Gros Morne Project Staff for their hospitality and courtesy during our visit, and for their patience in answering an unending series of questions. We hope that our description does justice to this unique project and assists in the design of an evaluation that will identify those aspects of the project which have succeeded and should be preserved as is, and those aspects of the project which should receive a mid-course kout volan.

The highlight of our visit was the meeting with members of Savan Long Nimeró En. They, more than anyone, convinced us that we were in the presence of a very special, and very promising project. We present this summary of our field notes as a professional courtesy to a project that is undertaking something of great potential importance.

OVERALL PROJECT ORGANIZATION

Project Personnel.

There are four general classes of individuals who are involved in one way or another in the Gros Morne project:

1. The staff of 11 salaried Haitian professionals and paraprofessionals who are charged with the execution of the project.
2. The members of all the groupman who have been formed under the project's auspices.
3. The members of a special subset of 7 groupman whose organizational maturity has caused them to be given a special role with respect to the organization and supervision of other less advanced groups. These are referred to generally as groupman animatè lokal, and occasionally as groupman misyonè.
4. The staff of those more remote institutions which have some legal responsibility for the administration of the funding and/or the general supervision of the project. These include: Catholic Relief Service, USAID, and the Diocese of Gonaive.

The salaried Haitian staff is divided along lines which correspond to the general organization of the Project.

1. The Project Director functions on a part time basis, allocating approximately 10 days per month to the Gros Morne Project.
2. The Project Administrator lives in the project compound and has prime responsibility for finances and accounting. He was not described as having any formal authority over the technicians of the project. But past administrators have in fact, by exercising one or another form of administrative veto, succeeded in imposing some authority on the running of the project. It is not clear to us at this point whether this was intended in the design of the project.
3. The technicians associated with each of the four sections of the Project.
 - a. Section for Organization. This is headed by an Agronome who has been seconded by the Department of Agriculture to direct this section of the project. His salary comes partially from DARNDR and partially from the Gros Morne Project itself. He has under his supervision four Agents. The job description of each of the Agents is identical. They differ in terms of the regions for whose organization they are responsible. Three of the Agents are from Gros Morne itself and live in their own houses in the community. The fourth Agent is from Jean Rabel and lives on the Project compound.
 - b. Technical Section. This is also headed by an Agronome seconded by DARNDR.
 - c. Health Section. This section is composed of two Health Agents, a senior Agent who has been with the project from its beginning, and a second Agent who arrived later.

- d. Education Section. There is one woman entrusted with the design and implementation of the educational component of the Project. She is the most recent arrival, and her program was described as being the most recently formed and most embryonic of the Project's activities.

Physical Infrastructure.

The Project Center is a large compound just north of the community of Gros Morne itself. The project operates out of several buildings that serve multiple purposes (project offices, living quarters for the resident staff, and a kitchen and dining room. The ownership of the land was described to us as being ambiguous. The land was apparently purchased by a German dentist who had been associated with the MISEREOR funded Gros Morne hospital. This owner transferred the property to a German priest who at that time was living in Gros Morne. This priest then allocated part of the land to the Project. The ownership of the land is unclear to us, but it was not mentioned as a source of conflict. The presence of a barbed wire fence, erected by the Priest to prevent expansion of the Project over the entire surface of the land, indicates that some potential ambiguity may exist.

The buildings themselves were constructed several years ago at a cost of some \$70,000. The original plan was to have these buildings serve as a center to which peasants from the surrounding region would come to receive training. As will be seen below, this phase of the project was perceived to be a failure by project staff, and a mid-course correction produced a new arrangement in which the dynamic contact with peasant groups takes place, not in the Project compound, but in their own communities. Thus the stone houses serve solely as a site for the project lodging and administration.

The houses are equipped with running water and flush toilets. In addition a Delco has recently been acquired, which is used to provide light at night.

In addition to the houses, there are several structures on the compound used for technical experimentation. Most prominent is a row of chicken coops in which three types of chickens are currently being raised. There is a large plot of ground that had beans on it during our visit. We were told that these beans were being grown under experimental conditions, to test the differential effectiveness of various fertilizing strategies. A gas-run water pump is installed in the river which is adjacent to the compound. This pump serves as the source of irrigation water for the experimental plot.

Vehicular Support.

The Project Director and the two Agronomes all have jeeps. The agents are supplied with motorcycles. We were told that horses were also available for the use of the Agents during visits to communities not accessible to their motorcycles.

PROJECT HISTORY AND THE EVOLUTION OF GROUPMAN.

The Project as it is currently conceptualized and executed bears little resemblance, we were told, to the Project as originally conceived. The current emphasis on the groupman as the pivotal point of development is the result of a mid-course correction that was made when the Project ran into serious difficulties in its earliest days.

As originally conceived the Project was to have as its major pillar the creation of a training center to which peasants of the region could be brought in for instruction, principally in the domain of improved agricultural technology. The construction of the houses on the present compound was done with this purpose in mind. It was to be the center to which the outlying population would be drawn.

In line with this the first programs of the project consisted in training sessions in which chosen farmers were invited to participate in 3 sessions, each of which lasted three weeks. This nine week course focused on technical matters.

In the beginning there was little emphasis on the creation of new community organizations. The Project instead approached the already existing Community Councils to explain its purposes and to recruit candidates for the training course. During this early phase, hundreds of peasants from dozens of communities were brought in.

But the problems began immediately. They were described for us by project staff.

1. Lack of interest in the new technologies. The farmers of the region were simply not interested in the new agricultural technologies that were being promoted by the center. They were seen as irrelevant by the local population.

2. Faulty theory of diffusion. The assumption of the project was that the technologies learned at the center would be taken back to the communities by the persons who received the training. It was hoped that these individuals would then voluntarily and spontaneously pass on these new skills to their neighbors. This obviously did not work.

3. Distortion of messages by the trainees. In some cases the communities were, we were told, being given false information about the project itself and about its intentions in the region.

4. Desire for jobs by the trainees. Perhaps the major unanticipated turn of events, we were told, was the unwillingness of the farmers who had passed through the training cycle to work for free back in their home communities. They created for themselves the hope that, subsequently, they also would become paid employees of the project, just as the technicians who had trained them. When they learned that these hopes were not to be realized, their reaction was disappointment and, in some cases, angry criticism.

In response to these patterns, the Project staff decided on several radical structural changes in the Project itself.

1. A move out to the villages. The Center stopped being the physical gathering point for the peasants of the region. This idea itself had succumbed to two problems:
 - a. The peasants found it difficult to go to the Center. They often lived at great distance from the Center and could not easily combine the care of their gardens and live-stock with travel to the Center. Furthermore they had to put on better clothes than they wore during their daily routines. For these simple practical reasons the concept of a physical gathering point for local peasants proved unworkable.
 - b. The project staff found itself isolated from the peasants themselves. When they functioned only in the Center, they depended on their trainees to serve as intermediaries between them and the peasant masses. Messages were being distorted.

To combat these patterns a decision was taken that henceforth meetings and training would be held, not in the center, but in the villages themselves.

2. A new type of organization. The original emphasis had been on the transmission of technical content. When this proved unsuccessful, a decision was taken to make the focus of the project, not the transmission of information concerning technology, but the creation of new types of local farmer organizations. Group process rather than improved technology became the project focus. It was this decision which transformed the project and gave it what today is its central distinguishing feature.

THE ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONING OF THE GROUPMAN.

Basic Concept.

In contrast to the traditional Community Councils, the groupman of Gros Morne is small in size. It is a voluntary association of neighbors who have self-selected each other. In contrast to most cooperative movements, the Gros Morne groupman is highly unstructured. The underlying purpose of these groupman is to group individuals into small units with the purpose of collectively solving problems that the individual himself cannot solve.

Basic Purpose.

From the point of view of project organizers and project conceptualizers, the groupman have multidimensional functions: economic, social, personal and others. But from the point of view of the peasants with whom we conversed, the prime function of the groupman appears to be that of helping the member fe ekonomi -- save and invest money. The process works as follows. The farmer will join a group of people with whom he has longstanding personal relations. The group will make a collective decision as to the amount of money that each member will contribute. Nobody is permitted to contribute less on any pretext. Nor is anybody permitted to contribute more. There are strong egalitarian principles which dominate. As will be seen, the farmers resist vigorously the notion that the group has a "leader".

Once a common fund has been established, the group then decides on the uses that will be made of the money. That is, the money will not be allowed to rest in a kes. It is not a fund for emergency borrowing. It is rather a source of capital which will permit economic ventures that the individual would be unable and/or unwilling to undertake on his own.

In understanding the groupman movement in Gros Morne, it is essential to perceive that, from the farmer's point of view, the principal *raison d'etre* of the groupman is the opening of the door to a type of small-group savings and investment that the individual would not do. There are many personal and social advantages that accrue to the groupman member, but these all occur in the context of an underlying economic goal.

Types of Economic Undertaking.

Though all groupman are expected to save and invest money, the level of the common fund as well as its use are left up to the groupman members. There is no attempt to impose ideas on the groupman -- project staff are strongly committed to the concept of not imposing ideas from without. As will be suggested below, this results occasionally in artificial coaxing when the staff feels it has a good idea which the farmers could not come up with on their own. But in general such coaxing is avoided. It is the right and duty of the groupman to decide on its own activities.

The decisions usually take the form of activities associated with traditional agricultural and livestock activities. The farmers will make a ti-depo -- a store of crops which will be preserved and marketed jointly when prices have risen. They may rent (or even purchase) a plot of ground on which they will make a collective garden. They may use their fund to purchase two or three cows which will be taken care of by the group and the proceeds from whose produce or sale will be used by the entire group. Or the groupman may decide to undertake some collective commercial venture, such as the purchase and long-distance transportation and resale of local fruit. (One such large venture will be described below.)

Linkage of Groupman and Individual Activities.

The undertaking of cash-generating ventures of this type will strike observers, at one level, as being perfectly compatible with the cash-oriented character of rural Haitian life. The Haitian peasant is a cash-cropper, and it should surprise nobody that groupman organize around common economic goals.

But from another point of view, this engagement of the peasants in communal production and marketing activities may strike observers as a departure from the economic individualism which has been correctly attributed to the Haitian peasant. The famous konbit is an event in which labor is pooled. It is much rarer, in traditional life, for peasants to pool money, land, agricultural produce, or cattle.

But the discrepancy is only superficial in the early stages of a groupman. In the first place the groupman members only allocate a small percentage of their energies to these group pursuits. The bulk of their economic activities are still directed to their own land and livestock. The groupman activity is seen as a new way to invest and save. Though the analyst can perceive the radically different economic principles which it invokes, for the peasant himself the groupman activity is simply (from an economic point of view) an adjunct to his traditional individual pursuits.

In the second place the peasants do not combine land or livestock which they already have. Rather they pool money to gain access to new land and livestock.

That is, the peasants have evolved a modus operandi which permits them to undertake radically new collective activities in a way which meshes with their continued adherence to a traditional individualized economic strategy.

Use of Profits Generated.

Conversations with farmers lead us to believe that, though the individual groupman can return some profits to members, the farmers generally choose to keep all the money -- both the original capital and the profits which this capital generated -- in the group and to undertake new ventures. That is, farmers employ their "personal" money for consumption, but appear to leave the groupman money alone.

Long Range Economic Objectives.

Several farmers referred to the need to preserve all the money until manman projè a fin realize, i.e. until "the mother project has been achieved." This "mother project" -- perhaps translated as "master plan" -- appears to refer to a sense of general long-range objectives to which these small intermediate ventures are merely transitional steps. That is, there is a sense of expectant excitement in the group as each venture slightly augments the collective assets of the group.

Once again we see a transformation on a traditional theme. Traditionally the individual Haitian peasant farmer, or the individual Haitian marketwoman, engaged in long-range economic planning. Here, however, it is a small group that is doing it, and doing it systematically and with the excitement that only a group process can generate.

Average size of the Groupman.

Originally the size of the groupman was set at 15. But there has been a recent decision, headed by the peasants themselves, to reduce the maximum size of a groupman to 10 members. Experience has shown that there is an encumbering of the group process when the number exceeds 10. There is less free discussion during the weekly meetings -- and the ability to speak freely in a group is one of most highly valued non-economic advantages for which peasants praised the groupman movement to us. The principle of lib diskisyon is a central theme. Furthermore, once the size of the groupman increases, then the danger of internal conflict increases.

This setting of a maximum number illustrates that the groupman movement is not a totally laissez-faire matter. There is not total freedom to follow any path. The groupman has a great deal of autonomy in most matters, but there are certain guidelines that are set to qualify for participation in the movement. These guidelines preserve the central characteristics, and guarantee the conceptual integrity, of the movement.

What is interesting, however, is that these basic guidelines are set and modified by the groupman members themselves. They are not imposed by the Project staff. Virtually all such mid-course corrections are made by the peasants themselves.

Social Composition of the Groupman.

Statistical data were not yet gathered on these matters. But there appears to be a mixture of both sexes and several religions and economic strata within the groupman. A survey would be needed to gather statistical data on this matter. But in terms of norms, there is vocal value placed, not on homogeneity of group structure, but on the fact that the groupman succeeds in uniting people who are different along one or another dimension. This value is emphasized not only by Project staff, but also by groupman members themselves.

Internal Structure of the Groupman.

Both Project staff and groupman members themselves are firm and vehement in their assertions that the groupman has no chef, no "leader" who can tell other members what to do. The vehemence of farmer assertions in this regard are undoubtedly linked to the presence of authoritarian power figures in traditional Community Councils, figures who intentionally or unintentionally inhibit the expression of opinion on the part of other members. The vehemence with which the egalitarian character of the groupman is pointed out gives the listener a clue to the importance of this dimension.

But for practical reasons the group has to have specialized roles. There are two specialized roles:

1. Tresorye. One person is entrusted with the group's collective resources. He is rarely the keeper of large sums of money -- rather, most of the money is "put to work." He is rather the administrator and reporter of the common activities.
2. Responsab. This person serves as a contact person between the groupman and the Project staff and other outside agents. He is in no sense a "leader" who can command the other members of the group. The responsab and the treasurer are generally two different individuals.

Meetings of the groupman.

The groupman have regular weekly meetings. Each groupman chooses its own meeting place and meeting time. But all groupman are expected to meet at least once a week. This is another of the guidelines, adherence to which is a requirement for participation in the movement. That is, just as it is not the prerogative of the group to have 20 members, it is also not the prerogative of the group to meet only once a month. Once again, then, we see the application of guidelines combined with the leaving of autonomy to the groupman in other matters.

Training and Supervision.

In its early stages the groupman is given advice by the Agent for its particular region, who visits and supervises the meetings, the common endeavours, and the general functioning of the groupman. A recent development has seen the appearance of advanced groupman whose own maturity has reached such a level that they can now function as the organizers, trainers, and supervisors of new groupman. This is a particularly interesting and promising feature of the Project which will be discussed at greater length below.

The Use of Credit.

Once a groupman has been formed and a series of successful small endeavours have been undertaken by members using internally generated funds, the way is paved for the phase-out of the project with respect to that groupman. They are, in principle, now autonomous, and have learned to undertake self-sustained income generating activities.

However there is an additional role that the Project itself continues to play, even with mature groupman. This is the provision of cash credit. The Project has by now lent money to about two dozen of the groupman that have been founded. This is but a small percentage of the 425 groupman that have been reported to have been founded. But this provision of credit is a role that the Project can continue to play.

We have no information yet on certain quantitative dimensions of this credit -- the average loan, the payoff rate, the average profit generated by use of this credit. At present we know only that the largest loan was in the magnitude of about \$400, and that the interest rate has been set at 1% per month (ie. 12% annually).

The credit is made to the group, and in general the amount of credit to which a group is entitled is linked to the amount of capital it has generated internally. Exceptions can be made in principle, but in practice this linkage between internal funds and access to credit funds is maintained.

In recent months a new type of credit has also been instituted by the project: dwa tiraj. This "right of withdrawal" is a type of individual credit which individual groupman members can apply for for their own personal and/or domestic uses. The purpose of this is to head off the occasional disruption of groupman by members who, faced with an emergency, may feel obliged to withdraw the money which they have in the groupman.

The Evolution of Special-Function Groupman.

The Project gives evidence, at least in its organizational dimensions, of having advanced to higher levels of sophistication. The most impressive sign of this is the elevation of 7 particularly effective groupman to a new status and role in the Project. These advanced groupman, in addition to carrying out the joint activities that all groupman in principle are supposed to do, carry out the additional tasks of:

1. encouraging other farmers in their region to form groupman;
2. advising and supervising new groupman in their early days.

In view of this role, these groupman are called groupman animatè lokal (local animator groups) or groupman misyone (missionary groups). The commonly used Project name for these groups is groupman a.l.

In effect every member of these groupman becomes himself an animator, an Agent responsible for the formation and follow-up of new groups. For their services they have been receiving \$10.00 per month to use in the groupman treasury. The follow-up activities which these groupman carry out are referred to as verifikasyon ("verification"). Regular procedures have been established for this task.

This new dimension of the project has apparently led to the formation of many new groups. Though precise figures were not given, we were told that most new groups are formed through the intervention of the groupman a.l. rather than through the intervention of the Project Agents alone. And it may be that a good percentage of the total of 425 groupman that have been formed were formed by these special groups.

This is an unusual dimension of this project. From a purely administrative viewpoint it multiplies the capacity of the Project personnel. From a motivational capacity, it increases the autonomy and self-sustaining initiative of the groupman. Quite interestingly, one of the original groupman animatè lokal was reduced from this status by the remaining seven groups because it had failed to meet certain requirements. That is, as the Project advances, the organizational autonomy of the peasants in the region seems to be increasing.

The Evolution of Higher Level Associations.

Another sign of organizational progress is the spontaneous joining of several groupman into one larger temporary association for the carrying out of economic activities that surpass the capacity of an individual groupman. The example of this that was cited to us was the joining of several groups for the collective marketing of mangos. Because of market constraints, mangos rot on the ground in many regions. Several groupman decided to purchase a large quantity of mangos, rent a truck, take the mangos to the

market in Lestere, and collectively market them. Using a combination of internally generated capital and credit supplied by the Project, the venture was undertaken by the group. Several hundred dollars of profit were realized.

Quite interestingly, the groups that participated decided to save the profits rather than redistribute them. A plot of ground was purchased and plans exist to build a local store there. The intention is to sell tools and construction materials. (Basic foodstuffs will not be sold to avoid competition with already existing establishments.)

Thus we observe the incipient emergence of stable higher-level associations of several dozen members, but whose prime affiliation continues to be to the small 7 or 8 person groupman to which they originally belonged.

The Evolution of Advanced Training Mechanisms.

Other dimensions of the project have also experienced advance. Several mechanisms have emerged which facilitate training beyond the initial support given to individual groupman.

1. Kongrè. The "Congress" is a meeting convoked in a region to deal with a particular topic on which the Project needs to make decisions. Questionnaires are first circulated to the local groupman to initiate reflection and discussion on the matter. Congresses have already been held on the topics of credit, storage, fertilizer, education.
2. Seminè. The "Seminar" is a meeting for motivating and consolidating the achievements of groupman in a region. The topic of discussion is groupman philosophy itself, rather than one of the specific topics dealt with in a congress.
3. Reinyon rejonal. In these meetings all the groups in a region discuss their own activities in front of other groups in the region. The central feature of this regional meeting is criticism of each other by the different groupman.
4. Reinyon entim. The "intimate meeting" has the very special function of permitting Project staff to introduce new ideas into the local groupman. There is a philosophical reluctance on the part of Project staff to "force ideas" on local farmers. The "intimate meeting" is a compromise vehicle for permitting the Project to introduce potentially useful ideas that local farmers might not generate on their own.
5. Vwayaj. Trips are organized for selected groupman to visit other project sites in Haiti and to generate alternative uses for groupman funds. Most trips have been to the Papaye training center, but other trips are being planned. In addition the Project staff has made a trip to the Dominican Republic

In summary: the Project has designed a series of discrete (and explicitly named) group activities for the continuation of training beyond the initial phase of groupman formation.

BROADER FUNCTIONS OF THE GROUPMAN

In addition to the undertaking of joint economic activities, the groupman serve additional purposes for the farmers who participate. The observations to be made here in this regard come, not from Project staff, but from conversations with farmers.

Social and Behavioral Functions.

1. Ability to speak. Farmers appear to value greatly the opportunity to speak their mind in a group setting. The traditional Communcity Council meetings are dominated by local wealthy and powerful leaders. Farmers rarely get a chance to speak in these meetings -- and the farmer who does dare speak will hardly feel free to express an opinion that is at odds with those of the leaders present.
2. Assistance in emergencies. When a groupman member becomes ill, or when somebody in his family dies, the entire groupman may act as a unit to assist or console the fellow-member. Such neighborly assistance occurs, of course, without groupman. But it is intensified and in a sense formalized when the groupman does it as a unit.
3. Support against abuse. If a group member is the victim of some abuse, whatever its nature, he has a group of people that will support him in a special way. The very occurrence of abuse may be stopped by knowledge that the "target" has a group of organized friends who may leap to his defence.
4. Elimination of costly personal habits. In some cases the excitement generated by a growing communal kes has led individuals to eliminate certain personal habits -- smoking, drinking, attendance at cockfights -- which are drains on potential investment capital. These activities are identified as fo bezwen ("false needs"), and there is public recognition given in the groupman movement to eliminate them where possible. One Project staff member stated that he had stopped smoking under joking pressures from farmers who had done that themselves. The extent of these changes cannot, of course, be assessed without more information. But the groupman movement appears paradoxically capable of producing, for economic reasons, certain behavioral changes which different church groups try to introduce for religious reasons.

Changing Values and Idea Systems.

In listening to several assertions made by farmers who are participating in the groupman movement, in recognizing that these ideas were clearly introduced by the groupman Project, and in comparing these ideas with more traditional ideas which we have found in the other regions of Haiti where we have worked, we were impressed with the potential of this groupman movement to have an impact on the ideas and value systems of the participating farmers.

Summing up this entire presentation of the groupman movement, we can see that it is capable of producing changes in economic values, in social values, and in personal values.

1. Economic values.

- a. Value on saving. "Avek groupman nou fè ekonomi." "Groupman se bank malèrez." With assertions such as these we see a new interest in the concept of saving money. People become more aware that they are wasting much of their money. The groupman movement is seen as a way of discovering and plugging the holes.
- b. Value on investment. "Fo ou fè lajan ou travay." The groupman movement reinforces and strengthens the traditional notion that money can "work" to produce more money. Negative value is placed on keeping the group money in the form of cash. Positive value is placed on putting it to work.
- c. Value on deferred use of profits. "Poko sèvi avèk benefis groupman. Kite-l la jis manman projè a realize." Don't withdraw the profits to use for consumption. Leave them there until the "master project" has been achieved. The notion of a "master project" that must be accomplished provides a sense of growing suspense and excitement and a symbolic rationale for leaving the profits as well as the initial capital. In short advanced groupman manifest in their speech adherence to a new value system with important implications for their economic behavior.

2. Social values.

- a. Value on union. Farmers traditionally know that they can work faster if they pool their labor on each others' fields. But the groupman explicitly articulates this principle of mutual assistance and extends it to other domains beside field labor. One image used is that of the butterfly who dies. One ant alone cannot carry it away. A group of ants can.
- b. Value on speaking out. There is little support in traditional social organization for speaking one's mind on controversial issues in public. The groupman reverses this norm of silence and encourages people to speak freely on the topics addressed by the groupman and in the context of groupman meetings. This is not generalized to all public situations, of course. But the groupman experience provides a forum that is greatly appreciated by the farmers who go through it.
- c. Value on egalitarianism. "Nan groupman nan pwen chef." "Nou 8 chef, nou 8 solda." "Depi groupman gen chef, groupman kraze." Assertions such as these, made with vehemence, suggest the activation of strong egalitarian

tendencies by participation in the groupman experience. This egalitarian urge is, of course, deeply embedded in rural Haitian life. But its expression is frequently deferred for situational reasons. The groupman provides a context in which "everybody is boss and nobody is boss."

- d. Value on independence. "Retire konfyans ou sou moun." Stop counting on other people to solve your problems. In great contrast to assertions heard in other parts of Haiti, where peasants invoke the need of "blan" (foreigners) to solve their problems, Gros Morne groupman members have come to be aware that foreigners cannot solve their problems. This is partially supported by the totally Haitian project staff. But farmers were even heard to say that "Projè a met fè rout li. Groupman an ap toujou la." Even the Haitian Project staff are increasingly viewed as superfluous. This independence is precisely what most projects fail to achieve. The members of one groupman with whom we conversed had composed a song telling "etranjè" not to meddle in their affairs. Though they courteously refrained from singing it in our presence, the creation of a song such as this reveals the growing presence of a spirit of self-sufficiency in solving local problems.
3. Personal values. These have already been discussed and are implicit in much of what was presented above.
 - a. Sense of personal worth. The values of egalitarianism and independence in social domains betoken a simultaneous growth of a sense of personal worth. To the degree that the groupman movement can contribute to this sense, then it will have succeeded in contributing, not only to the economic development of the community, but the personal development of individuals.
 - b. Sense of personal discipline. Reference has also been made to the new definition of money-wasting personal habits such as smoking and drinking as "false needs" which must be eliminated. Members of certain advanced groupman have explicitly and publicly eliminated them. We are then confronted with a paradoxical situation in which the personal life of the peasants becomes much less toxified and much more disciplined than that of the experts who try to "develop" them, the clergy who try to "save" them, or the researchers who try to "study" them.

To sum up this section: from the peasant's point of view, the prime function of membership in groupman is that of saving and investing money. But the manner in which this is done has potential impact on the social and personal lives of the participating farmers as well. Conversations with peasants indicate that, in at least some cases, these potentialities have been converted into fact.

TECHNICAL, HEALTH, AND EDUCATIONAL COMPONENTS

The preceding section should be interpreted with precaution. The objective of that section was to organize information gathered during several preliminary conversations and a brief field visit and to give an overview of the organizational component of the Gros Morne Project. But in the absence of statistical validation of many of the assertions, the statements in the preceding section should be taken, not as statistically documented fact, but as general indications of what appears to be happening in the project. We feel confident that not only are large numbers of groupman formed, that in addition most of them are engaging in some form of joint economic venture and that a small number of them are progressing to the stage where they can serve as organizers and supporters of younger groups. The forthcoming evaluation should provide more precise information. This report is merely intended to be a guide as to which points should be looked at in the evaluation.

However, in addition to the Organization Section of the Project, there are personnel allocated to three other functions: Technical, Health, and Educational. The following pages will briefly discuss these components.

In discussing them, it should be pointed out that the former two -- technical and health -- were initiated originally somewhat separately from the organizational component. But these technical and health programs ran into so many difficulties that original plans were abandoned. At present both technical and health activities, and the more recent educational activities, are implemented through the groupman formed by the Organization Section of the Project. The groupman, therefore, is not merely the vehicle for the Organization section. It is the center of the entire project now

Technical Section.

As was pointed out in the opening pages of this report, improvement of agricultural technology was a major focus of the earliest program. But these original activities had little success and for a long period of time there was a virtual cessation of focus on technical problems. During this hiatus the Project dedicated itself to the shaping of a groupman strategy, a period in which organizational, rather than technical, issues were prominent.

The Technical Section, however, has been revived. There is an Agent in charge, an Agronome. He participates in the "Congresses" and general meetings of the Organizational Section. In terms of independent activities of a purely technical nature, he has two major items.

1. Demonstration Plot. On the compound itself there is a large plot of ground planted in beans. Different sections of the parcel have been allocated to different fertilizing strategies. The intent is to draw empirical conclusions concerning the differential effectiveness of these different fertilizing strategies.

2. Experiments in Livestock Feed. Experiments were reportedly being carried out in livestock raising techniques. The most prominent activity in this regard was the maintaining of three chicken coops

each with a different type of chicken.

It was not clear exactly how these activities meshed with the groupman activities. In terms of the validity of these activities, several problems seem to warrant mention.

1. Quality of technical controls. So many extraneous variables are interfering with the experimental bean plot, for example, as to reduce the generalizability of the results. The beans are planted and weeded and fertilized at different times because of the difficulty of finding labor locally when the tasks have to be done. Similar problems reduced the utility of a similar demonstration plot planted and harvested last year.

2. Lack of groupman participation. There was no evidence that the local groupman were involved in, or even interested in, the technical experiments that were being carried out. The Project was unable to find laborers who would weed the field on time. The very existence of this problem in a Project where there are over 425 groupman indicates that there is virtually no involvement of the groupman.

3. Lack of a coherent integrating plan. There is still no coherent conceptual model of precisely how a discrete Technical Section could make independent contributions to the groupman movement. At present, the existence of this Section manifests a realization on the part of the Project that improvement of productive technology is important, and a hope that the project will be able to contribute. But there is no systematic plan for grafting this component naturally into the Organizational component of the Project.

Recommendations will be made in this regard below. With proper planning this very important Technical Section could make genuine contributions to the agriculture of the region .

Health Section

The entire Health Section has been recently evaluated by Dr. Reinhard Koppenleitner, a German physician on contract with MISEREOR. Pending the arrival of his report, a few observations on the Health Section can be made.

The original intent of the Health Section was to create 11 Health Posts (pos sante) which would have minor remedies and would weigh young children to monitor growth and detect malnutrition. The Health Posts were to be created in association with a "Health Club" in each community with a Post. Through several mechanisms these health posts were to link up in several formal and informal ways with the Gros Morne Hospital.

Most of the Health Posts never were built. Only two were actually established, one of which has since disappeared. The concept of an autonomous "Health Club" also found little reception in the community. All participants agree that this phase of the program was a phase which did not succeed.

The reasons for failure may be discussed in more detail in the forthcoming report of Dr. Koppenleitner. Briefly it would seem that the very idea of an autonomous "club" in each community to deal with health matters is alien to the current habits of the Haitian peasant when dealing with illness. Furthermore the heavy preventive focus was also out of kilter with the peasant's emphasis on curative medicine. Simply stated, no formula was found to "organize" the communities around health issues.

The program has been revived, however. There are currently two Health Agents. There are several features of their approach which could be mentioned.

1. Emphasis on spring capping and latrine building. The focus of the activities remains preventive, rather than curative. But the preventive activities of spring capping and latrine building provide something more concrete and interesting for the peasants than the provision of simple messages about what to do or what not to do. Currently some 30 springs have been capped, and an expansion has been planned of the latrine building program.

2. Integration of Health Activities into groupman. There is still the notion of the "Health Club." But now the Health Clubs are not independent groups, but subgroups of highly motivated groupman. That is, the health activities have been integrated into the Organizational component, at least insofar as the groupman is now the basic unit of health activities as well.

3. More systematic preparation. There is now much more careful selection of the communities where health activities will be initiated. The prerequisite is the existence of a well organized groupman that is mature enough to undertake health-related activities in addition to the economic activities that constitute its original raison d'etre. There is an initial contact made. If the group is judged adequate, then a two day seminar will be held. Questionnaires concerning local health problems will have been filled out.

4. Emphasis on sharing of traditional knowledge. Groupman are encouraged to discuss serious health problems that affect any member or his family and to recommend local traditional or modern remedies that they have found useful. If the illness lasts for more than a few days, the groupman will immediately encourage the member to seek professional help. That is, attention to both traditional and modern concerns is present.

The major difference between this Health Program and the program of Agents de Sante of the Dept. of Health consists in the attempt of the Gros Morne project to incorporate health concerns into group process. Whereas the government's Agent de Sante makes individual house to house visits, the focus of this Project's Health Agents is on the groupman as the major vehicle for information flow.

The health program is also seen by staff as being one that needs further development. One very concrete problem is the lack of technical skills on the part of the health agents to cap springs. Sophisticated engineering knowledge is necessary, but the engineer contracted to give technical assistance is not always available with the desired regularity. Thus many of the project's resources go unused. With respect to the latrines, the local peasants originally counted on the construction of elaborate structures. When the project developed a simplified model of the latrine, disappointment was a common reaction. There is a tendency for at least some peasants to make of the latrine, not only a receptacle for human waste, but an embellishment of the compound as well. It may even be the case that in some compounds with latrines, they serve only the latter function, the former still being served by nearby brush.

As with the Technical Section, the integration of the Health Section into the groupman movement has yet to be satisfactorily achieved. The problem appears to stem less from the Project itself than from the inherent difficulty in imbuing the matter of preventive health with the same convincing excitement that is evoked by the prospects of a commercial profit through common groupman economic activities.

Education Section.

The most recent section is one dedicated to creating educational activities of interest to communities. Because the Educator responsible for this Section happened to be absent from the community during our visit, this is the component on which we have least information.

From the outset the Education Section has been grafted onto the groupman movement. That is, the groupman itself functions as the major decision-making unit with respect to the structure and functioning of the Education Section.

Three general classes of activity are planned: preschool education, education of youth, and adult education. Only preschool activities have seriously commenced.

Approaching the more mature groupman, the Project ascertained what the major concerns were with respect to education. The major complaint of parents was that, with current schools, it appeared to make no difference whether the child went five years to school or no years to school. The amount of education necessary to make a difference either in the literacy skills or eventual job chances of the child was prohibitively high for most peasant families. The peasants asked whether there could not be a more practical curriculum which would result, after four or five years of schooling, with skills that really were worth the money invested by the parent and the time invested by the child.

The response adopted by the Project appears, on the surface, to bear little relation to this particular concern. Some 6 preschool centers are now functioning. The parents of a groupman delegate an individual to receive training in preschool

instructional techniques. This individual then returns to the community and opens a preschool center. He or she is paid about \$50.00 a month. The Project is paying virtually all of the salary at present. The hope is that eventually the parents themselves will begin paying a larger and larger portion of this monthly remuneration.

The undertaking of preschool activities is certainly a valuable project from several points of view. But it is not easy to see how this fits in to the overall objectives of the groupman project. There are dozens of nice activities that could be undertaken, and this is certainly one of them. Why this was selected instead of others -- e.g. nutrition programs, sewing lessons, and other activities -- is not clear. However, because it is an area that deals with formation, there are many potential linkages to the groupman movement. This will be the task of further evaluation: to seek for ways of achieving a better conceptual integration and program execution of the disparate activities into a unified whole.

THE ISSUE OF STAFF MORALE

The brevity of our visit precluded any deep insights into the presence or absence of morale problems among the staff. Certain impressions, however, are worth communicating.

Commitment to Project Goals.

There was a high degree of consistency among the different staff members, separately interviewed, with whom we talked. They were consistent in their descriptions of the history and current functioning of the project. They were consistent in their descriptions of the groupman-centered philosophy around which the whole project revolves. And they were uniform in their commitment to this philosophy. The staff gave the impression of a high level of motivation and of commitment to project goals. Some staff felt that they were working on components of the project that were not working as well as other components. But they were above-board in saying this, and their attitude was that the means should be found to make their component work as successfully as the "Organizational" component of the project, that component which deals directly with the formation and supervision of groupman and the provision of credit.

Willingness to Make Mid-Course Corrections.

The staff was refreshingly consistent and open about pointing out, not only the successes, but also the failures of the project. There had obviously been a great deal of reflection and group discussion about the project. There is a spirit, not of defensive adherence to past practices, but of seeking "mid-course corrections." There was constant reference to the need for regular kout volan (use of the steering-wheel) to turn the project onto better paths.

Tensions on Certain Administrative Matters.

There are several administrative points about which some concern and dissatisfaction were expressed by different members of the staff.

1. Budgetary inflexibility. While recognizing the need to adhere to the terms of the original budget, some felt that there was excessive rigidity in demanding Port-au-Prince approval on any little change that the field team felt was necessary in expenditures. Flexibility should especially adhere, they felt, when the recommended change came from the entire staff. The issue of field autonomy vs. Port-au-Prince prerogatives needs further examination.
2. Vacation inflexibility. Several members of the staff have gone several years without taking their annual leave. They would prefer to be paid for these unclaimed leave days rather than be told that they have to take them.
3. Restrictive motorcycle policy. Most of the staff live in the project compound, separated from spouses and children who may live in a different region. Project policy permits regular monthly visits, but forbids use of motorcycles to travel outside of the project region. After several years on the Project, staff feel they should be allowed to use their vehicles, paying costs. This matter should be discussed.

Domestic Separation and Job Insecurity.

One significant element of this Project, which is found also in at least some other Projects in Haiti, is the pattern by which the staff hired to run the project are living in isolation from their spouses and children. The three Agents who are from Gros Morne are, of course, the exceptions. But all of the staff living in the compound must travel great distances to visit their families. This has been achieved by creating a seven day work week, but by allowing six monthly leave days in which the staff can travel to see their families, who may live in other parts of Haiti. Two of these days are generally spent in travel, leaving four days a month with family.

When queried as to why they did not bring their wives and children to Gros Morne and rent houses, the staff pointed out that this was not only difficult in terms of the drain that would create on their salary, but that the continuation of the project was contingent on so many factors out of their control that it would be a risk to transfer their families and suddenly find themselves without a job far from their home communities.

This pattern reflects one of the major factors governing the commitment and motivation of individuals hired to implement projects in rural Haiti: the transitory nature of projects. City-based foreign and Haitian development personnel for the most part have jobs which are not linked to the funding of a particular project. The Haitian staff hired in the field, in contrast, must live with the notion that if they succeed in making local communities independent of the project, they themselves will then be without a job. It is a credit to the staff of the Gros Morne project that they repeatedly insist on the eventual disappearance of the Project as one of their goals. But outside funding and evaluation agencies, when trying to understand the performance and motivation of field staff, must be aware that, whereas their own futures are reasonably secure, that of the Haitian field employees who actually implement the project is not at all secure.

This point is being raised here as a background issue, a dilemma over which nobody currently has any effective control. Projects will run only when there is commitment on the part of field staff. Human commitment has been found to be more easily forthcoming when it is exercised in the context of an integrated career. But the funding agencies can fund only short-term projects, and the staff who enter those projects cannot (and, in Gros Morne, do not) view it as a lifelong career. This means that the Haitian field technician must be constantly asking himself, not only how can I make this project work, but also: what will I do for a living when the project ends? Foreign development experts, especially those with secure careers in international organizations, should be cognizant of this personal dilemma on the part of local Haitian field staff. And though they, the foreigners, can provide no solution to this dilemma, they should temper any inclination to rashly judge the motivation of local technicians, whose life chances are radically different from that of foreign career professionals.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report is meant to be, not an evaluation, but an organized presentation of field notes to identify the directions that an evaluation might take. Nonetheless we will offer a few tentative conclusions, which are subject to radical revision once more empirical data are gathered.

1. The initial stages of the project went very poorly. The failures of the early days led to the development of a strategy based on the organization of small, autonomous farmer groups. This new strategy has succeeded in creating new patterns of economic and social activity in the region. The extent of the success can be assessed only with systematic research. But something is clearly happening in the region as a result of the project.

2. The most impressive achievement is the organization of some 450 groupman, and the evolution of some of these groupman to a stage of maturity where they themselves can organize new groupman.

3. Though project staff emphasize organizational philosophy, peasants appear at least equally, if not more, interested in the concrete economic activities that this new organization permits. Most groupman are reported to have undertaken some collective endeavours. The mature groupman will have already undertaken many joint economic ventures. That is, this project is not "organization for the sake of organization." There are concrete economic activities linked to the organization.

4. The extent of the impact of these economic activities on the region, or even on the domestic economy of the participating individuals, cannot yet be stated. They appear to be generating at least some additional income. It is clear that, in addition to the income, a great deal of excitement and hope is also being generated. The evaluation should provide more specific economic data.

5. Project staff has developed an advanced series of meeting types: Congress, Seminar, Regional Meeting, Intimate Meeting, and others. They have not yet developed a model of the different phases through which a groupman will pass in its own development. There is merely a rough distinction between "new" groupman and "mature" groupman. What is needed is a sense of the life cycle of a groupman, an information gathering system for saying which phase each groupman has entered, and a series of explicit strategies for assisting groupman to move on to their next phase. The basic groundwork for such a typology has already been laid.

6. Though the extent of economic impact cannot yet be stated, what can be stated with reasonable certainty already is that the groupman project has introduced new patterns of savings, investment, and deferred spending in the region. Virtually all groupman members are trying out something new in this regard.

7. In addition to its purely economic functions, the groupman movement gives evidence of having impact on local social organization and local idea systems. The members with whom we conversed had entered a social and ideational realm that we had not seen anywhere else in Haiti. The differences were highly positive.

8. The two major functions that the Project serves in respect to the groupman are formation/supervision and the provision of cash credit. These have been discussed in the body of the report. It is noteworthy that the flow of cash or other material resources out from the project to the peasants has been minimal and carefully controlled. Credit, for example, is carefully linked to the proven capacity of the group to generate and responsibly manage its own internal resources. That is, the peasants appear to value this project, not as a source of free goods, but as a source of assistance in achieving autonomous, self-sustaining endeavours on their own. Thus, administrators should be careful in criticizing the project for slow disbursement. The slowness comes apparently from the conscientiousness of the staff in assuring that groupman are ready to responsibly manage credit. The success rate and the repayment rate for the credit disbursed is reported to be high.

9. The Organizational Section has been most successful in assisting peasants to organize to try new commercial ventures. But the Project has not yet been successful in introducing into the region any new techniques that will truly increase local production. Stated differently, the project is doing well at teaching peasants to exploit the techniques and markets that already exist.

10. The slowness of the development of a valid technological component to the Project may be at least partially linked to a philosophical reluctance on the part of the staff to "impose ideas" on the peasants. There may also be, among the staff, an unfounded belief in the power of "organization" to solve all problems. Staff should reexamine these premises and recognize that, whatever other social problems exist, underproduction is a serious problem, and that this problem will not be solved until new and better land-use patterns are introduced, practices which simultaneously protect and enhance the physical environment and generate both food and cash income for the peasant.

11. Project staff should not assume either that it is "wrong" to introduce such ideas, or that the peasants will somehow miraculously come up with them on their own once they are organized. What the groupman are more likely to do is, not invent new technologies, but examine alternatives presented to them from without and, by local experimentation, adapt them to local reality.

12. The Technical Section of the project is thus important. But it is still weak and has not found for itself the convincing role that the Organization/Credit component of the project has found.

13. Perhaps the Technical Section should adopt the strategy that the Organizational Section adopted early in the project. I.e. stop using the Center as the physical locus for activities, and move these activities out into the community. This would mean that the agricultural and livestock research that is currently being done in the Gros Morne Center (and which is having the problems discussed in the text) might better be done out with the groupman themselves.

14. Concretely, different groupman might commit themselves to testing out certain ideas and systematically comparing different

technologies. The content may be in terms of increased food production, the production of fast-growing wood for charcoal and construction materials, improved livestock production, and other domains. But the ideas stand a better chance of acceptance if they are linked with the promise of reasonably quick returns to the participating farmers.

15. When dealing with an unproven technology, the groupman who agree to participate should formally commit themselves to carrying out research on their own land and providing the project and other groupman the results of their research. Up till present, the groupman have viewed themselves as organizers of commercial ventures. Some groupman may also commit themselves to being organizers of research useful to the region. As was suggested by the Agronome in charge of Technical Section, the project could absorb any risks, leaving to the groupman the benefits of any successes.

16. Recommendations for the Health Section will not be made, pending the results of an evaluation that was recently done by Dr. Reinhart Koppenleitner. Some brief points would be that:

- a. The emphasis on the concrete activities of spring capping and latrine building should be continued.
- b. There should be less exclusive attention to purely preventive health, and some attempt made to make the groupman a vehicle for helping individuals solve their curative problems as well. This domain will excite more spontaneous interest than lectures on hygiene or water boiling.
- c. The emphasis should be continued on using the groupman as a vehicle for health concern. This will provide an experimentally useful contrast with the approach being used by government Health Agents, who utilize the individual household visit.
- d. The groupman may serve, not only as a source of shared information, as is now being tried, but also as a sharer of collectively owned material resources as well. Whether this takes the form of a groupman stock of simple medicines available to members, or of a groupman kes for use in health emergencies, or some other form, can be determined by further exploration and experimentation. But the groupman should be utilized as the vehicle, if for no other reason than that this is one of the few projects that stands a chance of some breakthroughs in this area. The Health Section of this Project should set itself the task of proving and showing that group process can lead to improved health care and nutrition behaviors.

17. The Education Section is too recent, and our information is too scanty, to draw any conclusions. But one thing does seem clear. If there is widespread illiteracy among adult groupman members, the Project should address this. A move in this direction would, of course, have to be coordinated with the public agency officially responsible for such activities in Haiti. But this is an area in which the Project could become educationally involved. The preschool activities currently undertaken should be linked to some long-term goal that relates to other aspects of the project. We do not yet know what the curriculum of this pre-school training is.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

We hesitated to go into as much detail as we have on the basis of such brief contact with the Project. Nonetheless we felt it better to organize our notes and present them, repeating the precaution that our findings come from brief contact with staff and from contact with only six or seven peasants during a brief field visit. What we have done in this report is merely present, not findings, but descriptive hypotheses which lay out what appears to us to be happening in the project.

If the economic and organizational energy of the groupman with which we interacted is widespread throughout the project regions, then this will truly turn out to be a remarkable project. The purposes of the evaluation should be to:

1. find out how many groupman have engaged in what types of activities;
2. what the economic payoffs to individual members have been from these activities;
3. how widespread are the new social and ideational patterns which we briefly glimpsed in the region;
4. what appears to determine the differences between groupman that work and groupman that fail;
5. how precisely is the staff organizing its time and energy, and is the Project organized in a way that maximizes its contribution to forming economically and socially successful groupman;
6. how do those farmers that participate in groupman differ from those that do not participate.

We entered this pre-evaluation with frank suspicions concerning a project that "organizes for the sake of organization." We feel that development funds should generate some material improvement in the lives of the beneficiaries. Organization and consciousness raising that does not succeed in dealing with poverty would appear to have little relevance for Haiti.

We now see that the organizations formed in the Gros Morne region do in fact spring immediately into economic activity, that from the peasants point of view, this is their prime function. But we also see that these groupman are being organized in a way that simultaneously creates attitudes and values of strong -- almost fierce -- autonomy, self-reliance, and internal generation of capital. In addition the excitement and enthusiasm evident in the farmers with whom we spoke suggests that the project is having, in at least the mature groupman, a positive impact on the personal self-image and general social life of participating members.

Though development projects should perhaps not have personal and social enrichment as a prime goal, the fact that this appears to be happening simultaneously with intensified savings, investment, and general economic energy suggests that we may be dealing with a project that is simultaneously addressing many human needs.