SECOND CARNEGIE INQUIRY INTO POVERTY AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Signs of Hope
Reviews of the film festival
by
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Signs of Hope is the name given to the film festival that was screened during the Carnegie Conference. The films make up a programme which shows, through a visual medium, the work done throughout the world in mobilising people in the struggle against poverty. The Festival is on those projects which represent Signs of Hope. These films draw on the experience from China, Indian, USA, Europe, Latin America and Africa.

This publication is made up of reviews and comments on the films, compiled by Noel Schwerin as a guide for the Conference organisers. The intention behind its publication was to preserve the coherence of the festival so that it could be used again in other circumstances.

**CONTENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Edge of Survival</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru: Literacy for Social Change</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fragile Mountain</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That Our Children will not die</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widening the Circle: Cameroon</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little by Little</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fight for a Shelter</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generations of Health</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Electric Valley</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water means Life</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning from China (Energetic Chinese Villagers)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Country, My Hat</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distant Thunder</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Brief sketches of: Seeds of Health)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Valley</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mondragon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call your Centre people for help</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are so poor, yet we are so many</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All reviews and comments by Noel Schwerin, except where otherwise indicated.
The Edge of Survival evaluates the world hunger problem, its philosophical justifications, and some of the attempts being made to alleviate it. By carefully examining the varying success of six developmental projects in Brazil and India, it reassesses existing approaches to development and demonstrates how community-generated, self-help programs can provide the most immediate, appropriate, and lasting relief from hunger and related problems. It "looks beyond the statistic" of an annual death rate of twenty million due to hunger to the physical, social, and philosophical conditions of both the people who suffer and the projects designed to help them. Edge of Survival's appreciation of the enormity and complexity of the hunger problem registers a warning, "There may be an apocalypse, a popular uprising in the making." But in recognizing that, for most of the billion people so near the edge, any small shift of fortune could end their lives, Edge of Survival also suggests that an equally small shift in the other direction could make those lives full and successful.

Through interviews and observations, the Edge of Survival explores the philosophical attitudes that allow such hunger to continue. Though agronomists have proven that modern agricultural production can feed the world's population, the film demonstrates how religious leaders, developers, and even the hungry themselves participate in myths that confuse the issues and interfere with the solutions of the hunger crisis. In England, a minister describes one such justification. He believes, as the philosopher Morphus did two thousand years before, that starvation is nature's and God's necessary check on population growth. In India, the philosopher Swami Muktananda teaches that "no one is responsible for another's pain or pleasure; each man is wholly responsible for his life." One side of this message is self-determination, the other, fatalism. In Brazil, The Edge of Survival illustrates how one American's "massive solution to a massive problem" is imposing multimillion-dollar technology on the Amazon forest in an attempt to produce food. In Ecuador, the film describes how Manuel, a destitute farmer, "historically believes that help, if it comes, will come from outside given as a gift or taken by violence." Along with these interviews, The Edge of Survival's attention to religious and cultural resistance to change, especially in India, suggests that the solution, like the people, must be much more integrated and personal than the mere production of more food.

The Edge of Survival visits projects employing these and other development ideas. In so doing, it demonstrates many of the pitfalls and addresses the related issues of development.
David Lugwig's spectacular attempt to transform 5800 square miles of the Amazonian jungle into usable agricultural land illustrates a huge capital-intensive approach to development. Here, the casualties of this project include more than broken tree-crushing machines and bulldozers or abandoned prefabricated housing. Not only does this technological approach preclude the employment of local labor, but it also necessitates selling the 130,000 metric tons of rice to cash markets abroad. It bypasses the Brazilians (pictured) who really need it. It also represents a huge threat to the ecology of the Brazilian jungle.

On the southern shore of India, the government and the United Nations Development Program funded a research project to make fishing more productive. During the season when the sea was too rough to fish, several sonar-capable vessels tracked the migration patterns of fish. The results significantly increased the catch of the big off-shore trolleys that were informed, but at the same time dramatically reduced that of the barely subsisting, inshore canoe fisherman. Like the Ludwig project, food production escalated, but also jeopardized the livelihoods of the most needy.

Again in India, the government funded a program to employ the worst off segment of the society: the landless poor. In keeping with a cash crop theory in which surplus revenues from successful production "trickle down" to the peasants, the government planted acres of poppy seeds. But the landless workers still received only a subsistence wage and never saw the financial rewards of their labor.

In comparison to these projects, The Edge of Survival tells the story of a very different, and very successful, approach to development in another part of India. Raj Ran Gupta, an industrial engineer who survived the famines of 1943, initiated the building of a dam in the small Indian village of Nana. He persuaded the villagers that the same elements that they "had cursed" in the past could be turned into valuable resources. The rocky soil would become the ballast for the dam. Trapped by the dam, the seasonal monsoons would provide the irrigation for land during the dry season. The initial success of the project inspired the further development of land, water, and transportation resources. Now, because of concerted community participation and credit systems designed for the long term, the land yields plentiful crops all year long. And to stabilize Nana's new equilibrium, Gupta has introduced family planning. A model of small self-help projects, Nana also overcomes the hunger that Mother Theresa describes in an earlier interview as "being just like furniture being thrown around; that is the great hunger."

Finally, The Edge of Survival describes how a fishing community in northwest India assumed control of its money, and security for its future. "Spontaneously" rejecting the
exorbitant rates of the middlemen, the women decided they would transport the fish to market and handle the money themselves. In five weeks, the project was able to buy a truck to transport the fish. To increase the catch, the builders converted local boats to motor boats, creating a local trade. The village initiative and success attracted outside aid, and now the cooperative has an ice house, a canteen, and a health dispensary where, as the narration suggests, "all will live and prosper," and where we see a woman give birth at the film's close.

The Edge of Survival is a beautiful film. It looks closely at the reasons for hunger while still granting its "victims" a cultural dignity, pride, and strength. As the narrator suggests, the hunger problem is a labyrinth. The Edge of Survival draws the audience through that labyrinth, confronts it with its enormity, complexity, frustrations, and finally offers hope in descriptions of two local Indian projects. The Edge of Survival's advocacy of self-help projects in which outside aid need not be bigger than a pump or a truck, comes after reasoned appraisals of other approaches. Like the successful projects it describes, The Edge of Survival sensitively integrates people and cultural considerations into its critique of development. In so doing, it renders economic issues and "exotic" peoples understandable. The film is informative without being esoteric; it is poignant without being condescending.

The Edge of Survival's interviews, editing, and expert photography give the film a strong visceral sense of the conditions of poverty. In the beginning, The Edge of Survival follows a procession through Indian streets. A funeral party on its way to a public cremation, the scene is "shockingly explicit," and like much of the film, powerfully registers the reality, regularity, and ordinariness of death by starvation. In Ecuador, both the hardened landscape and Manuel's hardened face convey the plight of those on "The Edge of Survival." As he says, "it's as if we can never get past the beginning, as if everyday we start out all over again from scratch." In the fishing village, The Edge of Survival captures the villagers' great loss when they discover their greatly reduced catch. Documented without narration or music, the scene's empty nets and faces leave a haunting memory. In another scene at the same place, the canoe launcher goes through the ritual of retirement as he shaves his beard and head in preparation for begging, an honorable Hindu profession for the "last stage of man." In Calcutta, harrowing portraits of squatters and Mother Theresa's words combine to take poverty from the abstract level of global debate and reground it in the specific act of individual care.

Organized and written intelligently, The Edge of Survival loosely follows the four stages of man as described by the dance in the opening sequence. But in the concluding climate of hope,
the film inverts the order and ends with the birth of a child. The Edge of Survival balances specific economic analysis with evocative description. Though it only mentions the specific groups (women and children, landless workers) in, and political reasons for hunger, it successfully illustrates the general group on the "Edge of Survival" and what can or is being done to help them help themselves.
Peru: Literacy for Social Change illustrates how a literacy program in a Peruvian cooperative helps villagers educate themselves politically as well as acquire specific language tools. Based on the idea that individuals will best learn a vocabulary relevant to their specific social and physical needs, the literacy program engages villagers in discussions about those needs, and so initiates a process of self-evaluation. The film shows how this process not only creates the best climate for literacy education, but also strengthens the cooperative's sense of itself and its ability to effect change. Literacy, like the cooperative discussions it generates, is an instrument of self-reliance.

As the volunteer educators from the University of Santiago suggest, "The first phase of literacy is getting to know reality." The first segment of the film follows the teachers as they "get to know [the] reality" of the cooperative by interviewing its members. The president of the cooperative recounts how the Peruvian Revolution of 1968 transferred land to the peasants, but did not dramatically change their living conditions. With one of the highest priorities being adequate housing, the state "refuses to help," and the peasants "until now hardly showed a sign of their [own] initiative."

Interviews with cooperative members confirm housing as their biggest problem. The film captures the current mood of resignation, powerlessness, and mistrust in several telling question and answer periods. In answer to the teacher's question, "How do you get a house?" the villagers respond, "The president of the cooperative should give it, of course." And later, "We need education, but we could never check upon our leader. We don't know the laws."

Next, the teachers, and the film, turn to the disenfranchised element of the cooperative community: the migrant worker who works only during harvest. These seasonal workers describe the disparities between their predicament and the cooperative's amenities. Cooperative workers have social security, holidays, access to cheap food, and a fixed wage; "We don't." Peru: Literacy for Social Change next illustrates how teaching strategies incorporate pictures and discussions of the conditions of daily life, and so a basic political dialogue, into the literary sessions. These strategies include drawings of familiar scenes and objects which set off debates about, for example, what constitutes a good house. One villager confesses, "We will never get such a nice house because we don't work together." The film
shows the villagers' enthusiasm in talking about, and learning to write about, things that concern them most. The discussion of current conditions leads to a comparison with previous conditions under the "Padrone" and the plight of non-cooperative members. "The land reform has changed a lot for you. What about the migrant worker?" "Nothing has changed for them. It is not right. Now they are our slaves."

Peru: Literacy for Social Change follows the villagers to a general cooperative meeting after several weeks of classes. Equipped with a greater understanding of their own state and of the rights of the migrant workers, the villagers bring to this meeting a seminal political consciousness and an initiative to change. One member raises the issue of housing and addresses the president, "We still don't know how to cooperate on this, Mr. President, we need your help." The film ends with the commentary, "Now the insight into these issues can no longer be ignored. It will compel them to action."

Peru: Literacy for Social Change succeeds as a film for the same reasons that the literacy program succeeds as a training ground for political fluency: it listens to the people. Almost all of the information comes from individual interviews and group discussions in the community. Again like the program, the film works simply as a vehicle for communication. Careful, straightforward observation of the community members, their lifestyles, and their learning process infuses the film with a personality, dignity, and sense of progress. Like the teachers, it demonstrates a patience and a willingness to listen that allows for real dialogue. The unobtrusive camerawork and undramatic editing strengthen this impression. The community becomes the principal force in the development process, not the abstract benefactor of external policies. Ideas generate internally; they are not imposed from outside. Though no physical changes have occurred by the end of the film, the subtle mental shift of the community and the process of self-reliance have begun. The scenes of villagers writing and reading their first words are very moving. By documenting the community's progress, not by explicitly advocating it in the narration, Peru: Literacy for Social Change makes a persuasive case for the program's approach to literacy and social development. It is a simple, unpretentious account of a philosophy and a project that works.

For all its intimate observation, the film is guilty of several oversights. It does not discuss the specific land policy of the present or the past, and in so doing, never explains why the migrant workers remain landless and disenfranchised. That the specific mechanics of cooperative organization are not described confuses the social and legal relationships that result, both between the cooperative and its president, and between the members and non-members. Nor is attention given to prior education
in the community or to national policies. Finally, the film does not positively demonstrate that the community's "insights into these issues" will necessarily find a receptive ear.
The Fragile Mountain describes the worldwide problem of deforested and despoiled land in the specific context of the Himalayan mountains of Nepal. It illustrates how a growing population's need for agricultural, animal, and energy resources strips land of vegetation, upsets the ecological balance, and so threatens the very existence of that population. It convincingly demonstrates how land conservation must be an immediate concern of poor agricultural communities because their own precarious livelihoods depend so intimately on the resources nature provides. While specifically illustrating landslides and soil erosion in Nepal, The Fragile Mountain addresses fundamental questions of the use and misuse of land, overpopulation and overgrazing, alternative energy, appropriate technology, and most importantly, community participation in development. It shows how concerted community action and simple local planning can stem, if not reverse, dangerous patterns of erosion. The Fragile Mountain says that communities must reclaim, not abandon, land if they and their equally poor neighbors downstream are to survive.

The Fragile Mountain is also a portrait of the Nepalese people and the mountains in which they live. Through stunning photography and extended interviews with villagers, The Fragile Mountain dramatically shows the delicate and shifting balance of lives led close to nature. The villagers describe the physical and emotional damage of landslides and related plateau floods. Their daily lives and predicament are sensitively observed. Mountain plots, carefully terraced for crops, disappear under the weight of seasonal rains. The film shows how by their very acts of salvaging land for agriculture, the Nepalese are also destroying it. Villagers recount their constant fear. After the recent landslides ruined much land and killed many, "Even the living felt dead."

The Fragile Mountain documents the process of deforestation as villagers cut fodder for their livestock, firewood for their fires, and land plots for their millet. To meet the growing population's hunger for food and warmth, deforestation pushes higher up into the mountains, accelerating the frequency and power of landslides. One villager describes the dilemma of livestock feeding: "Without cattle we have no manure and no crops will grow. Without cattle we have no milk to feed the children." The film explains that in just the past decade, Nepal has lost one-third of its entire forest area. The Fragile Mountain watches the floods resulting from deforested mountains and calls the "downstream results even worse." Rivers rise, destroying agriculture as tons of topsoil drift away. As deforestation and
overpopulation stretch the mountain environment to its limit, the same loss of forest and land occurs downstream, forcing families to migrate.

Mountain villagers are ambivalent about the use of family planning to stem the problem. As one reluctantly concedes, "If I can't care for the [the children], I lose all respect." Another expresses the traditional thinking opposed to contraception, "Of course we would like to have less, but it's a gift of God. Some people pray and have none. We have been blessed."

The Fragile Mountain documents how the villagers react to and ultimately participate in the government's program to end the crisis. Initiated in the 1970's, the land and water management project shows villagers how integrated planning at the local level can reclaim land, provide alternative energy, and continue to support growing animal and human populations. Though initially "afraid it would take our streams," villagers learned how the building of check dams, reforestation planting, and controlled grazing could help contain soil erosion.

The Fragile Mountain also shows how villagers learn to harness alternative energy sources, and at the same time, increase agricultural production. A biogas digester transforms animal dung into clear, usable gas and provides, as a byproduct, a fertilizer twice as good as the original dung. They also discover how their nemesis—water—can instead generate power. The Fragile Mountain illustrates millet-grinding mills and pumps powered by water wheels.

The most important part of conservation, the film suggests, is in the renewal of over-taxed resources. It explains, "If you wanted some device that could produce fuel, retain water, stabilize mountains, and put to use ground not suitable for crops, you could hardly find anything better than a tree." And crucial to this renewal is the involvement of local communities. The Fragile Mountain shows how a community-owned forest project encourages villagers to adopt conservation projects and build a nursery. Moreover, the cooperative context replaces their feeling of isolation and abandonment with inter-village communication and self-reliance. Before, as one villager admits, "We didn't understand what led to what." A long sequence of an inter-village meeting shows how one village informs another of the ecological cycle as well as the process of reforestation. Here, the narration asserts, people are not abandoning their despoiled environment, but rather finding a new balance within it.

The Fragile Mountain appears initially to address a very limited problem in the mountains of Nepal. However, its intimate observations of, and interviews with villagers, combine with its overall message of conservation to present a moving and informative film about natural and human resources.
Interviews inform much of the film, and carefully balance descriptions of the plight of the villagers with proof of their ability to change it. It shows how simple, community-based projects can stabilize rural tree supplies and provide reusable energy. Community education helps prove that a different ecological balance is not only possible and desirable, but also absolutely necessary.

I recommend The Fragile Mountain primarily for its message that community-supervised conservation and land reclamation are central to rural development. But unlike most development films, The Fragile Mountain also presents a fascinating and visually beautiful portrait of a people close to the land. The photography, editing, and patience of the filmmakers make The Fragile Mountain as interesting an anthropological film as it is a development tool. Moreover, its intimacy and specificity lend to it a universality not evident in general "projects around the globe" films. It is rare to find a development film so specific and at the same time so technically accomplished.
That Our Children Will Not Die is a film about basic health care in Nigeria, where medical and non-medical people are joining to eradicate the diseases plaguing much of the Third World. The film opens with a brief account of the nation's high mortality rate and a Nigerian doctor's observation that most deaths are due to preventable or easily cured diseases. That Our Children Will Not Die shows how community participation combined with organizational flexibility and cultural sensitivity make the fight against disease possible.

Showing several successful Nigerian approaches to the delivery of primary health care, the film visits the hospital and the clinic, the city and the country, the doctor and the rural fieldworker. Like the projects it describes, the film focuses on the human resources available in any community. It shows how community members not only define their own health priorities, but also provide the manpower, facilities, and cultural link necessary to successful health care. The film clearly illustrates the process. In each of the four projects shown, outside help operates merely as the catalyst to internal, community-sponsored development. Visiting doctors simply ask the communities, "What do you think you need?" Through this process, communities inform themselves, and the audience, of their shared needs and their alternative solutions. Problems identified by the communities include the distance to and staffing of facilities, the cultural resistance to certain medical innovations, the lack of continuity in services, and the isolation of health services from other development issues.

In Itigia, a town in eastern Nigeria, the problems of linkage between dispensary and clinic, the shortage of facilities and personnel, and the long distances to facilities interfere with adequate health care. In response to these problems, a women's church guild constructs a health clinic, and with the help of a doctor born in the area, trains its members to be medical assistants and midwives. The community also sets up a network of local medical fieldworkers to bring services and drugs to those unable to reach the clinic.

In Gakida, an area where 90% of the population live in rural villages connected only by footpaths, villagers recognize the inadequacy of a centralized health facility. Village elders recommend training individuals from each village to practice basic health care in their respective homes. Cooperatively shouldering the cost, fifty-five villages send their representatives to a health training center, construct and staff a day
school for literacy classes, and invent a theater and storytelling program to teach sanitary habits. One villager attests, "People learn faster by stories. It's similar to our ancient moral instruction."

In Katsina, an ancient walled city in the north, cultural conservatism poses one of the biggest obstacles to the development of health services. The community decides to send respected community members into every household to interview families and assess their health needs. To lessen patriarchal resistance to the medical innovations and the female mobility necessary to the delivery of adequate care, prominent midwives initiate a father's club and role-playing theater program to engage men in the process of preventive care and to educate them to the folly of their conservatism.

In Lagos, lack of time rather than male resistance keeps women from regularly visiting clinics. Here, women's groups from the markets are invited to help fashion health facilities they can use. Local residents trained as nurses streamline activities by giving total health care (from nutrition to innoculations, from contraception to hygiene education) to mothers and children. The maintenance of detailed records by the mothers guarantees data for research and diagnostic continuity as well as encourages maternal responsibility.

Throughout the film, the projects concentrate on the prevention of common diseases in the highest risk groups, women and children. They accomplish this by developing human resources: retraining nurses and midwives to expand their role in primary care, training and employing lay fieldworkers to help mass screening and medical follow-up, introducing techniques to standardize health care and increase efficiency, creating facilities and associations to integrate development projects, and engaging communities in a non-pedantic dialogue of self-education. The film closes with shots of the various community programs and a Nigerian doctor's voiceover: "Our people are ready and willing. We must harness this enthusiasm so that our people will be well and so that our children will not die."

That Our Children Will Not Die succeeds as a film and as an educational tool for several reasons. Like the projects it illustrates, the film respects the integrity of the people by allowing them to speak for themselves, the integrity of the projects by capturing the communities' participation and enthusiasm, and the integrity of the audience by allowing events, personalities, and projects to unfold naturally without the interference of a narrator. It avoids stereotyping Nigerians as the "poor, helpless, and desperate" by giving them voice and by discarding the sensationalism and dramatic conventions that more often evoke pity than promote understanding. For the
same reasons, the film unfolds slowly and methodically. It describes not an isolated success, but rather the triumph of ongoing community participation and the possibilities that cooperation creates. The film is impressive because the projects, the people, and their chosen development process are impressive. The capacity for communication and shared solutions shown in the projects are also embodied in the film itself, making it a moving and valuable tool for educating others.

Formally, That Our Children Will Not Die captures the Nigerian landscape, atmosphere, and sense of community with expert photography. The filmmaker is most successful in her absence from the film. Camera angles and edit cuts are unobtrusive while still being technically sound. Continuity is established by Nigerian voiceovers citing individual concerns and solutions while urban and village scenes describe the physical reality. Because the voiceover and occasional narration do not simply verbalize what is already illustrated, they are able to carry other related ideas not necessarily part of the projects. The words of various Nigerians suggest the complexity and interrelatedness of such development issues as urban migration, technical brain drain, and water sanitation. They also offer alternative models to conventional education and bureaucratic institutions. Though all of the projects generate from the general program of the Institute of Child Health at the University of Lagos, emphasis remains on the communities themselves. That Our Children Will Not Die is a straightforward, sensitive account of health development projects and community participation in several areas of Nigeria,
WIDENING THE CIRCLE: CAMEROON
27 minutes total, approximately 8 minutes edited
color, 16 mm 1982
Sale: approximately $350
Distributor: Decade Media

Widening the Circle is the story of several African nations' moderate success in integrating the work and the life of women into their national development plans, and into the regional plans of Africa through the Economic Commission for Africa. While the film as a whole is flawed and at times irrelevant to the "Signs of Hope" film project, one self-contained segment merits inclusion in the series.

Widening the Circle: Cameroon crystallizes issues of women's participation in national development by illustrating self-help and ministry training projects in agriculture, health, and hygiene. It documents the initiative taken by local women as well as the cooperation they get at the national level. A woman from the Ministry of Social Affairs explains how women, because the children they supervise represent 50% of the African population, are directly responsible for Africa's biggest resource. The projects include setting up an agricultural cooperative, a paramedical training program for rural health, and classes for education in hygiene. Through interviews with village and official women, and scenes of their projects, Widening the Circle: Cameroon demonstrates women's desire to participate in national development and the emerging consciousness of their importance by national planners. The film suggests that women constitute the most important resource in national development, and that they must be included in planning if their own conditions and the health of the nation is to improve.

In a small, rural village, the film follows a women's group's activities as a community forum and a cooperative bank. The village women have pooled their assets to insure financial security for each member of the community in the event of family death or disease. In addition to emergency relief, the bank functions as a credit system enabling the community to begin and expand a plantain and banana cooperative. An example of how an income-generating project equips villagers with the cash and self-respect to develop in other fields, the cooperative attests to the value of human resources. Though the film shows both men and women clearing land for expanded production, women are most familiar with the health and hygiene problems in the village. At their organizational meetings, they appraise conditions, discuss alternative plans, and set the agenda for local development.

The film next illustrates another project inspired by this kind of agenda. In close cooperation with the National Organization of Women and the Ministries of Social Affairs and agriculture, women participate in a health training center. In response
to local requests, paramedics are trained to deliver primary health care to rural areas. The film shows a health clinic for urban squatters living on the fringe of the city, and how that care is being extended to more remote areas.

As a film, Widening the Circle: Cameroon works in several ways. It gives voice and credibility to the women of Cameroon's enthusiasm, resourcefulness, and productivity. By organizing the health, agricultural, and hygiene projects around a specific women's group, it demonstrates how community organization can bring focus and effect important changes in development practice, and how local initiative builds upon itself. An African woman's narration accompanies much of the film's account, and often identifies what is happening on the screen. Though it limits the time women speak for themselves, it does help organize and condense the information in a straightforward, unhysterical way. The narration also describes, more than most development films, the coordination of government agencies and local organizations. It does not embellish the plight of women. It is well shot and clearly edited. Because it covers several projects in a short time, only the women's meetings unfold slowly. For all its generality, though, Widening the Circle: Cameroon captures some of the rhythms of African village life with scenes of women clearing fields, washing by the river, and trading at the market.
Little by Little shows an innovative approach to improving marginal settlements in developing countries where conditions range from 'almost pleasant to appalling'. Barrio Escopa, a squatter settlement in Manila, Philippines, was chosen as a demonstration site in a project aimed at improving living conditions. Traditionally, government policy has been to destroy such communities and relocate the residents.

With funding from the United Nations Environment Program and assistance from the U.N. Centre for Human Settlements and the Philippine National Housing Authority, existing dwellings are being upgraded, drainage systems dug and footpaths constructed. The project, which emphasizes full resident participation, includes housing, nutrition, environment and waste management programs.

Residents and housing officials discuss the project's successes and weaknesses, the costs, and the problems encountered along the way. While some people express anxiety about the slow pace of the work, others are optimistic that, little by little, their living conditions will be improved.

Although much work remains to be done in the community the high degree of personal investment in their houses is a sign of confidence on the part of the residents. They now believe they have the right to remain there.

Whether or not the project succeeds at Barrio Escopa, only time will tell. But it is a beginning that can serve as a model for other countries with large urban squatter settlements.

(A Co-production of the National Film Board of Canada and United Nations Centre for Human Settlement (Habitat)).
The Fight for a Shelter describes the evolution of squatter housing in Bogota, Columbia in the context of escalating urban migration and a growing socio-economic dependence on cities. It outlines the steps necessary to legitimize spontaneous settlements, and illustrates how these settlements evolve more logically and naturally than those planned by housing authorities. The film suggests that declining agriculture and unlivable rural conditions will inevitably propel villagers to cities in search of jobs. As the direct product of that migration, squatter housing constitutes a popular response to housing needs, and should inform and be integrated into urban planning policies. By the fact of their presence, the film claims that squatters have become "instruments of change," bringing community values and rural ingenuity to urban settlements.

In counterpoint to shots of squatter dwellings, The Fight for a Shelter describes the shortcomings of a government housing project designed to attract would-be squatters. The housing looks attractive, but as the film observes visually and confirms in the narration, the project is empty because "the availability of jobs in the area was completely overlooked." The narrator asserts that ownership is fundamental to the integration of villagers into the city's mainstream.

In straightforward graphics, The Fight for a Shelter enumerates the steps leading to a legal and healthy settlement: the establishment of legal title, community participation in the planning, the construction of electrical and water foundations, the design and building of homes, the sale or assignment of homes, and the development of related social services like schools, clinics, and recreational facilities. The film shows how squatter settlements, because they "gradually" evolve to suit development needs and local resources, often display a greater industriousness, ingenuity, and cultural sensitivity than legal, city projects. The film follows the evolution of a squatter settlement from its initial cardboard-flap stage, through renovation with tin roofs and paint, and to the establishment of water facilities and schools. Communities advise and participate in every step of development. In so doing, they learn both self-determination and strategies of dealing with the city. The squatter settlement also provides the only real vehicle for urban "acculturation."

The Fight for a Shelter returns to a rural area and villagers talk about the problems and the incentive to move to the city. Here the film assesses the root cause of urban migration as "not in the cities, nor in city officials," but in rural
poverty which is a "congenital result of the system of social relationships." As demonstrated by the squatters, there are ways to adapt, but the film asserts that poverty must be alleviated if any real solutions are to be found. Unfortunately, other than squatter participation in planning, it does not suggest any.

The Fight for a Shelter makes a powerful case for the inclusion of urban migrants and their ideas into development planning. Through sympathetic photography, a sequence of poetry and city/squatter images, and an occasional interview, it successfully recreates the climate and rhythm of squatter life and conveys the dignity and doubt of migrant peoples. Perhaps the most subjective film yet viewed, its organization is a loose weave which complements the scenes it shows. The rich photography and narration infuse the film with an appreciative and at times elegiac sensitivity to the personality of a squatter settlement. At the same time, these same elements obscure the actual political issues at stake. The specific process of gaining legal ownership, though deemed necessary in the narration, is never detailed. Somehow, squatters seem to gain "legal" status just by virtue of their (undocumented) persistence and (unspoken) wisdom. Also, the film does not specifically address the issues of rural poverty, to which it attributes responsibility for all of the social problems discussed. Moreover, the film's sympathetic treatment of squatters does not stem from actual conversations with them, but rather from the external observations of the narration. Towards the end of the film, several villagers do speak about their plight, but only one of these interviews is translated into English. Though in no way does it condescend to the squatters, the message of the film is more about them than of them. While claiming to represent the squatters, the film interprets their priorities; it does not relate them directly.

In general, The Fight for a Shelter is moving, if unspecific. It does communicate the positive aspects of spontaneous settlements. It shows a strong sense of community participation: people help each other find work, improve homes, and gradually acquire the social and technical services they need; it simply omits a lot of details.
Generations of Health is a moving portrait of two generations' commitment to self-help and rural development in a small Tennessee town. Framed by descriptions of their most recent achievement, the Haywood Health Clinic, two pairs of fathers and sons talk about the various community projects they designed and participated in. Their recollections and plans for the future recount a legacy of activism and local commitment. And in the context of their relationships, this legacy is more than just proof of familial love; it defines a powerful incentive to continued development.

At the film’s opening, Jesse Cannon Jr. and Earl Rice, two of the clinic’s directors, fondly talk about their fathers. Jesse Cannon, Sr. was a farmer frustrated by the conditions of sharecropping in the 1930’s. From his earliest years, Jesse Jr. remembers his father fighting the system, and eventually buying his own land. Earl Rice describes his father, Tom, in equally admiring terms. Edited into these discussions are interviews with the elders, Jesse Sr. and Tom. They describe their early efforts to set up self-help projects. Implicit in this sequence (and the film as a whole) are the sense of evolution and spirit of continuity each has known, and needed, in his work towards a better community.

In combination, the interviews with the four men create a larger picture of the projects leading up to the clinic. The Rices explain how a neighborhood credit cooperative enabled Tom to buy his store. Jess Sr. recalls how a similar cooperative, the New Farmers of America, offered courses in small scale farming and furniture building. As the senior Cannon recounts, "We were people who lived in the community as teachers." "An extremely proud community" which rallied together to "raise money for a school" and other programs, the neighborhood spawned real progress as well as children who would carry on that progress.

The most lasting and explicit manifestation of this inheritance was the integrated school the younger men attended. The elder generation had been very active in the Civil Rights movement: registering voters, opening their homes to itinerant Civil Rights leaders, and providing mutual support mechanisms when their actions resulted in the wrath of local whites. Because of their efforts, their children not only went to integrated schools, but also changed these schools with the spirit of their parents. Jesse Sr. explains, "Somewhere we lost the idea of being afraid." The echo is resonant in his son's description of the first integrated schools: "It was an atmosphere of hatred. It was almost as if we lived on two
different planets...A lot of things changed because of us."

The final proof of this activist legacy comes in the realization of the health center. The two sons are directors; their fathers chair the advisory council. Despite opportunities elsewhere, Jesse Cannon Jr. and Earl Rice committed themselves to their childhood community. Earl admits, "Twenty years ago I wanted to get out. When I got back, I saw a need."

Though weak in its explanation of the clinic itself, and very modest in its production values, Generations of Health captures the purpose, cooperation, and love that generated remarkable development in a small town in Tennessee. A product of the people, the clinic is described in terms of those peoples' shared history and relationships. Generations of Health's appreciation of the community and interrelatedness of individuals and issues suggests some fundamental truths of successful, ongoing development: continuity, commitment, and the inestimable power of example.
THE ELECTRIC VALLEY
190 minutes, color, NSTC videotape 1983
Rental: $175
Distributor: The James Agee Film Project

The Electric Valley documents the transformation of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) from a spectacular experiment in socio-economic planning in the 1930's to a postwar agency increasingly motivated by profit, unwieldy in size, and unresponsive to its constituency. It describes the national government's unprecedented attempt to improve the conditions of rural poverty by harnessing the power of the Tennessee River, and by integrating it into a comprehensive program of water, land, labor, and energy development. Following the TVA through its fifty year history, The Electric Valley shows how the pressures of political debate, internal administrative conflict, war-time expediency, and economic expansion diverted the TVA from its original mission. It follows the TVA's gradual shift from an agency that championed integrated rural development to a business that reckoned profits over people, energy production over land conservation, and nuclear development over safety and property.

From its inception, two fundamental things distinguished the TVA from all previous development programs: its unique relationship to the people of the Valley, and its federal backing. The Electric Valley carefully balances its explication of both. Interviews with local participants recall the ways in which an extraordinary symbiotic partnership evolved into a parasitic one. Newsreels, newspaper clippings, and interviews with TVA administrators provide a rich, historical record of the TVA's relationship to the federal government and of the attendant publicity. Radical in its new definitions of government agencies, their programs, and their role in regional development, the TVA effected remarkable change in the Tennessee Valley as well as caused a fundamental shift in the popular definition of the state. As the editor of the Nashville Tennessean recounts at the beginning of the film, "I grew up thinking the TVA and FDR were good. It was as much a part of my life as oatmeal in the morning."

The first third of The Electric Valley describes the reasons for, the success of, and the personalities behind these new definitions. The Tennessee Valley suffered most chronically from flood-induced land erosion and underemployment. Dramatically illustrated in newsreel footage of floods and rural life, The Electric Valley documents the devastation of the Tennessee Valley. Wilma Dykeman, a Tennessee writer, gives an evocative portrait: "It was in many ways such a wonderful and beautiful place...and yet so eroded, and in need of great help. The land itself was bleeding away."
The election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, The Electric Valley recounts, "gave the people of the Tennessee Valley hope." In keeping with the spirit of the New Deal, Roosevelt appointed Arthur Morgan, "a very fine visionary and a brilliant engineer," to run a federal agency that could help the Tennessee Valley. In a unique attempt to develop the Valley as a whole and to involve the government in both planning and direct action, Morgan proposed a series of dams along the Tennessee River. Designed to stem the severe flooding, improve river navigation and transportation, generate cheap electricity, and so attract industry to the area, the dams would take care of the Valley's agriculture, employment, energy, and conservation needs. But Arthur Morgan's plans did not stop there.

With the completion of the Norris Dam, the first of the series, Morgan "had an opportunity to try new social ideas." He knew that to revive the Valley, all of the problems of underdevelopment had to be addressed simultaneously. The film illustrates this integrated planning in newsreel and old TVA film footage. It shows how planned communities of low cost permanent homes replaced barracks housing for the workers; how unions and cooperatives encouraged local participation and cooperation in planning; how five-hour work shifts provided more jobs for more people; and how training courses and cottage industries gave the people of the Valley new skills and economic outlets. To improve farming, the TVA started demonstration farms and gave local residents incentives to employ new farming methods, conservation measures, and newly developed fertilizers. However, The Electric Valley does more than just catalogue the TVA's innovations; it captures the spirit and cooperation that made these changes both possible and successful.

For a self-proclaimed "region of individualists where no one tells us what to do and plan is a four-letter word," the TVA had to be ultimately responsive to the needs of its constituency. Its commitment to rural electrification (a policy too "costly" for the private companies) and the use of local labor in public construction gave the TVA tremendous local credibility. As The Electric Valley shows, TVA representatives engaged even the remotest areas in the process of development. In one scene, The Electric Valley interviews a whole family of ex-TVA workers. In another, a black man recounts how the TVA hired blacks despite popular racism. In yet another, a local farmer tells how the TVA helped him increase his annual income from $96.00 to well over $4500.00 in one year. These unobtrusive, almost colloquial interviews bring to The Electric Valley a strong, visceral sense of how the TVA touched lives.

While The Electric Valley shows how TVA programs did much to improve the conditions of life in the Tennessee Valley, it also documents a more fundamental change in residents' definitions of government, development, and the individual. Barret Shelton, publisher of the local Decatur paper says, "The TVA
was so damn successful. With it we started a small poultry plant, a cheese farm, a grain mill, (etc.)...It's been a great partnership." As Wilma Dykeman explains, the TVA founded a role for the government that was both big and small, comprehensive in strategy and responsible to the daily needs of its constituency: "The meshing of needs in the early days was what was so interesting...that through this one river valley there were many things that could be confronted." Finally, a newspaper editor concludes, "The electric company was as much an institution as a friend."

As a public agency funded by Congress, the TVA's new definition of the role of government also made it vulnerable to political barbs. The second third of The Electric Valley is devoted to this controversy. Along with a highly publicized split within the administration of the TVA, aggressive criticism of the "encroachment of government" by private business and Republican politicians initiated a period of Congressional and judicial inquiry from which the TVA never really recovered. The mobilization of the TVA's facilities during World War II had temporarily deferred this controversy. But, with the popular election of the anti-TVA Eisenhower and his calls against "creeping socialism," the TVA lost its Congressional support in 1959. The sale of bonds became the "only avenue for further expansion." As the film's narration suggests, Wall Street "now judged the TVA by its balance sheets rather than its level of service to citizens."

The Electric Valley reconstructs the history, and so the reorientation, of the TVA during the 1950's and 1960's in detail. While admitting that internal and external forces all played a role in the TVA's ideological shift, The Electric Valley also recognizes that, because of its government tie and its continued expansion, the TVA had already distanced itself from its constituency during the war. Because of the need for power in military preparedness, the government had appropriated most of the TVA's facilities and had accelerated its growth during the war. By 1955, one-half of the TVA's electricity was being used for the production of atomic weapons and for nuclear research, making it difficult to attend to the energy needs of the valley. Also, the TVA's exponential growth had already begun to intrude on the lives and property of the Valley. The displacement of families and even, in one scene, of graveyards, became more frequent. By virtue of its size alone, the TVA was forfeiting its mission.

The last third of The Electric Valley documents the TVA's steady demise as an accountable public institution and friend to the Valley. In turning to coal to generate electricity, the TVA indirectly violated its original charter in at least three fundamental ways. As one of the nation's largest buyers of coal, the TVA influenced price structures and gave "impetus
to the technique of strip mining." In so doing, it encouraged an energy program that deprived residents of mining jobs, permanently scarred much of the land so crucial to the Valley's economy, and ruined the homes of many residents. As The Electric Valley demonstrates, strip mining was a mechanized, ecologically and environmentally unsound enterprise.

Towards the end of the film, the TVA's current director admits, "The TVA became a single-purpose power agency, and it shut its eyes to other concerns. It made the price of electricity a religious dogma above everything else." But even this preoccupation backfired, for the staggering cost of building nuclear reactors translated directly into higher electricity bills. By 1982, the TVA had the biggest nuclear program in the country but its electricity customers were paying three hundred percent more than they had eight years before. Moreover, The Electric Valley asserts, it became apparent that there was no market for the electricity generated by nuclear installations.

As in its first two segments, The Electric Valley incorporates interviews into its discussion of TVA involvement in coal and nuclear power. Here, as elsewhere, The Electric Valley's contact with administrators and local residents restores personal histories to the public record of the TVA's evolution. It is in these histories that a real portrait of the TVA's promise, contributions, and failures come to life.

If the TVA was designed to be responsive to rural residents, it also suffers its most poignant, and so harshest, criticism from these same people. In one incident, one of the TVA's dams unnecessarily displaced the Ritchies, a family whose familial legacy and livelihood depended on the land. When told the TVA was claiming her 190 acre property for the three acres it considered "vital," Mrs. Ritchie responds, "It's vital to us. This is where we live and where we work. We thought we'd just live out our lives here." And on the eve of their move, "We kept thinking someone would come to their senses."

The TVA's novel relationship to its constituency ultimately defined not only its purpose, but also its success. Accordingly, The Electric Valley judges the TVA by the criteria of this constituency. As a historical document, The Electric Valley makes sense of the internecine power struggles and partisan politics that helped shape the TVA. However, unlike the TVA, it consistently listens to the people affected. The editor of the Decatur Daily, the displaced Ritchies, and the Stiner dam workers tell more about the real nature and content of the TVA experiment than all of the newspaper clippings put together.

The Electric Valley's combination of historical record (newsreels, TVA films, news clippings, and broadcasts) and individual statements (residents, administrators, experts)
provides a comprehensive, if complicated, picture of the TVA. Even the early exuberant years are balanced with footage of cultural and physical displacements. In so doing, it raises a multitude of eagerly debated issues while still conveying a sense of how, why, and to what effect the TVA was a grand and incomparable effort. It is, in fact, nearly as epic as the TVA itself.

The TVA's "publicness" makes it a perfect vehicle for a discussion of rural development; most of the pertinent concerns have been aired during its fifty year history. A judicious and detailed record of the TVA's history, The Electric Valley organizes these issues provocatively. More important, it describes, through its interviews, how the TVA realized a dream, "a partnership of possibilities." As Wilma Dykeman says at the film's close, "One of the things the TVA taught us was that problems of people, land, water, and energy are all interrelated, and that these problems can be solved. The TVA left a great legacy of hope, badly battered, but still hope."
Water Means Life illustrates the search for an adequate supply of clean water in six developing countries: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Tanzania, Vietnam, and Yemen. It describes the huge distances women and children must travel to collect their water, and the pollution resulting from its use for bathing, washing, drinking, and waste for both people and animals. Water Means Life balances this description of water as a hazardous and often inaccessible necessity with examples of UNICEF-aided projects developing water resources and education around the world. All of the projects shown demonstrate how community involvement and practical know-how can transform the daily lives of water-poor people with only a little technical and financial assistance from UNICEF.

In Tanzania, villagers mobilize to build a water pipeline that will service hundreds of villages. With impetus from local women's groups, each community shoulders its share of the construction, and UNICEF provides the pipes. Water Means Life identifies women and children as the worst sufferers, as they must find and deliver the wood. Shots of a women's group also identify women as the leading development force within the village. The narrator suggests, "As it is her burden to collect the water for her family, it is her concern to find adequate sources." The leader of the women's group asserts women's particular plight, "We are being crucified" by this taxing chore. Long shots of the pipeline construction and interviews with Tanzanians testify to their physical and emotional support of the project.

Water Means Life next shows Yemen as a barren, sparsely populated land where communities are built far from water sources, and women must walk for hours several times a day to collect enough. The film describes one answer to the problem: the construction of simple tanks and pipes to hygienically store what water does exist. In the course of this construction, Yemeni learn technical skills that the film assumes will be useful once water gathering occupies less time. (The film ignores the fact that women collect the water while men acquire the skills).

Water Means Life goes to Nepal to illustrate the hazards of using water for too many purposes. The film graphically outlines the cycle of overused water, cattle defecate and women wash in the same stream that children, farther downstream, drink from. In response to this, local organizers and UNICEF teach children in one village sanitary habits. Medical field-workers also bring health education to the villages. In another
village, a UNICEF-funded well provides clean water from a subterranean source. One young village girl recounts, "We drink and wash in the same stream as the cattle. Until the pipe, people got sick. My sister died of typhoid she got from the water."

In India, this kind of health education faces even greater religious and traditional resistance. Also, wells previously built have broken or been abandoned because people didn't understand their mechanics or use. We see a UNICEF-sponsored program training Indians how and why these wells work, and on the other side, the dying children who will benefit from their use.

In the next sequence illustrating the construction of wells in Bangladesh, the narration describes how quick and "inexpensive" well-digging can be. Local labor uses "traditional tools" and "ancient techniques" to build wells in twenty-four hours and for two hundred dollars. The local foundry goes back into production, providing local jobs as well as parts for the pumps. Again, the film shows the response of a child to this progress, "I needn't spend my day looking for water now."

Though not suffering from a shortage of water, water purity is a big problem in Vietnam. There, the villagers dig very deep wells and move latrines farther from the rice paddies. After the feces dry and the bacteria petrify, villagers clear the latrines to use the waste as fertilizer.

Elsewhere, Water Means Life watches women and children digging deep into dried riverbeds trying to salvage water. "When I was young," one old woman recounts, "we had plenty. We all have big families now and there is never enough." We watch residents labor on pipelines, caches, and pumps, and join a festival celebrating completion. One village addresses the camera, "We want to say thank you [to UNICEF] from the bottom of our hearts." In closing, the narrator applauds that "spirit of cooperation, self-help, and willingness to help others--the UNICEF spirit. Water is everybody's birthright; nothing more, nothing less."

Water Means Life is a nice, optimistic visual memo. Until the end, it underplays the role of UNICEF in bringing about change, and often reiterates the voluntary labor and enthusiasm of the villagers. Visually pleasing, it gives a general picture of the people of each country as hardworking and receptive to change, while still giving salutary attention to their colorful cultures. Though covering a lot of territory quickly, it does mention related development issues. Appropriate technology emerges as a combination of modern and traditional methods; health education involves rural fieldwork as well as the modification of traditional ideas; water development depends on the
training of individuals to maintain equipment as much as to build it; women and children are identified as the most affected. Though part of the genre of agency films, Water Means Life successfully avoids merely advertising its sponsor.

Still, though, Water Means Life suffers from many of the common pitfalls of agency films. It relies on the narration entirely to provide information. Children are periodically ushered in front of the camera to attest to the success of the program. In itself, that is fine, and in fact much better than having them weep for pity as is usually the case. But to a certain extent, the community's stake and industriousness in each project diminishes. In general, the film catalogues some of the problems of and solutions to water development well. Unfortunately it does this in a rather impersonal and uncritical way. Change is an accomplished fact, not an ongoing process of critical thinking and political organization.
ENERGETIC CHINESE VILLAGERS
approximately 40 minutes, color, PAL videotape
Sale: approximately $700  1982
Distributor: Martha Stuart Communications

Energetic Chinese Villagers is an edited compilation of four videotapes about the construction and continuing success of a biogas project in China. One of the four tapes was produced by Martha Stuart Communications, the other three by the villagers themselves. As such, Energetic Chinese Villagers also demonstrates the applicability and value of using video communication as both a document and a development tool. In the first segment, a group interview with Martha Stuart, the villagers describe the character of biogas and the climate of the community at the project's initiation. In the three following segments, they demonstrate, through their own tapes, the actual construction of the biogas digester as well as its domestic and agricultural uses. In combination, Energetic Chinese Villagers shows how the villagers employ both the biogas and video technologies to improve their lives and to share that success with the outside world. Because they communicate directly in their own words and tapes, the villagers impart an exciting sense of cooperation and enthusiasm along with an enormous amount of specific information.

In Energetic Chinese Villagers, the villagers candidly describe their initial reservations and confusion about biogas technology. Then they go on to demonstrate to their own, and the audience's satisfaction, how creating energy self-sufficiency increases agricultural productivity, domestic efficiency and cleanliness, and greater social equality, cooperation, and mobility. They describe this progress in the group interviews, and then invite the audience into their homes, fields, and planning sessions to bear witness.

At the outset of the project, villagers had several fundamental doubts about the use of biogas: they could not believe that human and animal waste could provide clean, safe energy; they resisted using their precious "fertilizer," animal dung, in a process they did not understand; they considered the technology and necessary resources incomprehensible, inappropriate, or inaccessible. Even so, they were convinced, as they hope to convince the audience in the same way, by demonstrations of operating digesters conducted by more informed villagers. In turn, they use video to do their own demonstrations. An elderly woman shows how efficient, clean, and safe biogas makes her home. A villager illustrates how the biogas digester fits into and even adds to the natural ecological cycle, determining the village's human, animal, and agricultural productivity. A team of villagers details the surprisingly simple construction of the digester step by step. In all, they use video to demystify the process and the product.
"From the point of my family, I found out that digesters contribute not only to the whole village. They also improve our family lives." So says the villager who compares the uncleanliness and inaccessibility of firewood and the cost of coal with the "miracles" of biogas fuel. She demonstrates the ease and efficiency of a biogas stove and lamp, the ability to control them with a barometer, and the freedom they allow her from toil and sickness. Showing her neighbors her toilet, her pigs, and her refuse and gas pipes, she declares her life is much better and easier than before. Biogas makes things convenient and clean, she says, "because the pig dung goes automatically and directly to the digester," creating a complete sanitation system for human, animal, and agricultural waste. She also serves tea to prove, against prior misconceptions, that water boiled with biogas tastes clean and pure. Furthermore, as a villager in the interview says, biogas enables a more productive use of time: lamps allow students to study late and villagers to adopt "side businesses like embroidery."

The next segment produced by the villagers explains how instead of depriving crops of manure, the digester triples manure's effectiveness as fertilizer. It clearly illustrates how the byproducts of biogas generated from the process of fermentation become a constantly renewable fertilizer. After the digester has created gas, villagers first deposit its byproduct in fishponds to feed plankton and increase fish size and number. Then they scrape the silt and fish waste, now very rich, from the pond's bottom and fertilize mulberry trees, napier grass, and sugar cane with it, crops they'd never before had enough dung to feed. As one villager says, "Because we are farmers, production is crucial." This segment persuasively documents how by controlling biogas in the natural cycle, fertilizer life span triples and productivity soars.

Finally, a team of villagers demonstrates the step by step process of planning and constructing a digester. The villagers mold local suggestions and materials into a feasible plan with the advice of other biogas operators. The villagers specifically describe everything from the size of the hole to the shape of the digester's dome, answering pertinent questions in the process. By pointing out the various outlets and feeders, the villagers make the entire fermentation process understandable.

Energetic Chinese Villagers works on many levels and for many reasons. It captures the village's enthusiasm, cooperation, and willingness to share convincingly because, embodied in their tapes, are their own priorities of development and dialogue. Energetic Chinese Villagers is entirely their product, just as the biogas and the digester's related projects are their triumphs. As participants in the development and self-education
process, they are qualified, now, to be teachers. Moreover, the use of video in itself engages the villagers in further self-evaluation and growth. Throughout the tape, they reiterate that actual demonstration was the catalyst to their own conversion to biogas advocacy. The fact of Energetic Chinese Villagers proves that they now want to initiate that process elsewhere. And they provide not only a record of their own success and enthusiasm, but also a detailed, informative explanation of the construction, mechanics, uses of and misconceptions about biogas.

Energetic Chinese Villagers epitomizes one of the most important tools of development: the direct communication of the emotional and physical reality of cooperative progress. The normal criterion for criticizing development films do not apply, for it is not a question of how well something or someone was portrayed, but rather, how elegantly and poignantly they can and will do it for themselves. Implicit in this format, too, is the indisputably accurate portrait of a people, whether consciously or unconsciously drawn. Just by their choice of narrative, order, and subject matter, the Chinese villagers tell us something about themselves. They are not objects of scrutiny, however sympathetic; they are the author's of their lives and catalysts to development. And they leave an indelible mark on the audience.

(LEARNING FROM CHINA, the film shown at the Festival, is re-edited version of Energetic Chinese Villagers, incorporating extra material).
David Bensusan is a young South African film-maker who, in his first independently financed feature, has confronted the itinerant position of the black man in the white man's city, using the form of a thriller. Subtitled To lose your Pass is to lose your life, Bensusan's film follows the fortunes of a young passless African in his attempts to find (illegal) employment in Johannesburg. Although born in Soweto and never having been near a 'homeland', he is destined to be one of the thousands of illegal citizens - passless because of his mother's passlessness - she was not allowed to live in Johannesburg, therefore he has no existence.

Finding a job with Piet (Regardt can den Berg), a refuse truck driver, James (Peter Se-Puma) soon finds himself involved in the internecine strife within Piet's family unit. Piet's wife Sarah (Alletta Bezuidenhout) who at first treats James with kindness (although little respect) soon turns an about face when James's "blackness" threatens her shaky suburban stability and he begins to achieve ogre status in her eyes. A burglary in Piet's house, the disappearance of his Clint Eastwood hat, his murder of a black bicycle rider he sees wearing it and the resultant paranoia surrounding James's possible involvement provides an exciting thread around which the realities of South African life are weaved. Regardt van den Berg gives a performance of foaming intensity while Alletta Bezuidenhout as his traumatised wife gives a portrait of that peculiarly white South African neurosis that would be hard to beat. Peter Se-Puma as the hapless, passless but jauntily hatted James brings an ease to his part that forms a blithe contrast to his schizoid, tooth-gritted employers. David Bensusan has made an auspicious debut that bodes well for the future.
DISTANT THUNDER
101 minutes, colour, 1973
Director: Satyajit Ray
Distributor: Intercontinental Film Services.

Bengal, 1942. Abetted by his charming wife Ananga, an ambitious young Brahmin, Gangacharan Chakravarty has made his way from village to village until, now firmly established as a doctor, he feels able to set up as schoolteacher and priest as well. Enjoying a comfortable living and the respect of the villagers, Ganga is not unduly worried by the rising price of rice, vaguely blaming the distant war. But gradually the price soars disastrously; Dinabandhu, an old Brahmin from another village who comes begging, opens his eyes to the truth (the rice is being diverted to the army); and he realises not only his own ignorance and inadequacy, but his untenable position when the local rich man, Biswas, offers him rice as a concession to his caste while telling the villagers his store is empty. The situation worsens, beggars begin to roam the land, and the women forage for roots and pond snails. Already humiliated when Ananga betrays her caste doing manual labour to earn some rice, and realising the extent to which he is dependent on the villagers, Ganga accepts Ananga's suggestion that he sell her gold bracelets; he journeys to another village only to find that now money won't buy rice. Meanwhile, grubbing in the forest for wild potatoes, Ananga is sexually assaulted by a stranger, but saved by two friends who club the man to death; her friend sells herself to a hideously scarred lecher for a bag of rice (which the horrified Ananga refuses to share); and Biswas is attacked by angry villagers as a hoarder. As the famine reaches its height, Moti, an untouchable girl, dies of starvation outside their door; putting aside all considerations of caste, Ganga decides with Ananga's approval to bury the body. Just then the starving Dinabandhu arrives on their doorstep with all his dependents. Wryly Ganga observes that they will now have to feed a family of ten instead of two; eleven, says Ananga, shyly revealing that she is pregnant.

Light shimmering on the water; what appears to be a dead hand floating just beneath the surface; then the hand idly begins to toy with the ripples and the camera gently pans to reveal a girl dreamily bathing in the river and staring up at the sky as five fighter planes sweep by in formation: "How beautiful", she exclaims, "like a flight of cranes". This sequence of images immediately following the credits of Distant Thunder (themselves placed over images of tranquil nature and stormy winds starting to ruffle a field of waving corn) is Ray at his complex, evocative best. Long before we discover that this is some time after the fall of Singapore and that the distant thunder of World War Two will soon break over this remote Bengali village trailing a terrible man-made famine, that corpse-like hand already pollutes the placid river with its intimations of mortality. There is really no need for the complementary image later on in the film when order has begun to collapse in the village, two women save a third from attempted rape by beating her attacker to death, and a stream of blood flowing from a now unmistakably dead hand stains the same placid waters. The tautology here, or perhaps over expressiveness in an attempt to encompass a vast theme would be a better term, is part of the problem with the film. "Five million starved in Bengal in what has come to be known as the man-made famine of 1943" reads the last, accusing title after an apocalyptic vision in which the hero and heroine are faced by a silhouetted
horde of starving skeletal people receding endlessly into the distance, converging on their front gate with arms stretch out in supplication. The effect here is a curious mixture of Russian agit-prop and expressionism, and moving as it is, it fits uncomfortably into the subtle intimacies where Ray is most at home. To prepare for it, he has to resort to the melodrama which (again in a rape scene) marred the perfection of Days and Nights in the Forest, this time not only with the rape sequence, but with the earlier, looming shot of a hideously scarred man who will eventually profit from a social disaster by persuading a woman to sell her body for a measure of rice. The pity of it is that none of the melodrama is really necessary, since Ray tells the whole story, much more subtly, in the brilliant central section of the film where the Brahmin couple are pushed and pulled, with a delicate humour that is wholly persuasive, into an awareness of their true status as human beings. With the quiet quizzical logic Ray deploys so effectively (Distant Thunder is particularly reminiscent of the 'Postmaster' episode in Three Daughters), their horizons are widened and their privileged positions simultaneously whittled away from under them. The focal moment is perhaps the one in which the jaunty Brahmin, one of those Chekhovian figures Soumitra Chatterjee plays so well—a distressing mixture of dignity and absurdity as he plods through the mud with his rolled umbrella and his folded duster protecting his head from the sun, busily setting himself up as priest, physician and universal pundit all rolled into one—suddenly realises that for all his Sanskrit learning and the skimmed newspaper headlines with which he dazzles his illiterate flock, he really knows nothing. Hitherto he has explained the war, more or less as "Our King is fighting the Germans and Japanese", but managed to locate Singapore somewhere in the remoter states of India. Then an old man, a beggar even though a Brahmin, casually tells him the true story, not only strategically (where the war is happening) but economically (why rice is scarce and soaring in price). Typically Ray avoids any feeling of didacticism here by making the old man a whining misery, determined to cadge all he can from his hosts, and deserving of sympathy and respect only because he is starving; also typically, Ray makes the scene central not by stressing its ideological importance but by focusing on the secret approving smile with which the wife (another of Ray's magical heroines) encourages her husband to listen and digest the lesson. The crux of the matter for these two good people, who are only just learning how to use their goodness, comes not with the open rhetoric of their vision of starving millions, but with their confrontation by a single victim immediately beforehand: the wife's friend, a low-caste peasant woman whom, as Brahmins, they cannot even touch as she lies dying outside their house. In Indian terms, the husband's decision to break the taboo by burying her to save her body from the jackals, and the wife's silent nod of approval, amounts to a revolution; and in his exploration of their evolving relationship to each other and to their community, Ray makes it more earth-shattering than all the global implications of his final image and title.

Tom Milne
We were unable to get detailed reviews of the following films and so what follows are very brief sketches of what is contained in them.

SEEDS OF HEALTH

As an alternative to expensive western-style health services, a number of Third World countries have instituted a system of health promoters for rural areas. The Chimaltenango Development Project in Guatemala is an example of this new approach to health care. This film shows how villagers chosen by their communities to undergo medical training return, not only to treat the sick, but also to advise on related matters. Thus, though basically a health project, it recognises the larger issues that determine the success or failure of any preventative medicine programme and attacks the root cause of many health problems on a social and economic level. The emphasis is on adapting modern medical services to the demands of local culture and the system actively promotes self-help in all its forms.

THE VALLEY

Whilst this is an old film, it gives a good insight into the development of the Tennessee Valley Authority as a public works programme in the depression to generate jobs for unemployed Americans. It also suggests ideas which might prove creative in Southern Africa in the 1980s.

MONDRAGON

This film tells the story of the development of an industrial co-operative in Northern Spain. Starting in an isolated rural area, the co-op has grown in a single generation to become a major generator of jobs and income in a poor region of the country. A careful appraisal of the Mondragon Experiment is to be found in the Carnegie Conference Paper No.241, by Alan Gelb, which was presented at the Conference.

CALL YOUR CENTRE PEOPLE FOR HELP

A brilliantly made BBC video takes us to the edge of the Rajastan Desert in India where, over the past 15 years, an important experiment in community development has been taking place.

WE ARE SO POOR, YET WE ARE SO MANY

This, together with "Call your Centre People for Help", is one of the BBC "Wheels of Fire" series. It describes how street hawkers of Ahmedabad, who are amongst the poorest women in India, organise themselves and create not only a bank but improve their own position considerably.
These papers constitute the preliminary findings of the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa, and were prepared for presentation at a Conference at the University of Cape Town from 13-19 April, 1984.

The Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa was launched in April 1982, and is scheduled to run until June 1985.

Quoting (in context) from these preliminary papers with due acknowledgement is of course allowed, but for permission to reprint any material, or for further information about the Inquiry, please write to:

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