

## Latin America and the Caribbean ISTR Regional Network

### ISTR Latin America and the Caribbean Network Meets in Santiago, Chile

The second seminar of the ISTR Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Network successfully took place in Santiago, Chile on September 23 and 24, 1999. The seminar, attended by over 170 participants from 11 countries, was aptly titled "Toward Development with Citizenship," and proposed to address the questions of identity and strengths of the Third Sector in the LAC region. "Who are we?" and "What resources do we have?" were guiding questions during the two days of intense work.



*Participants at the LAC Santiago Meeting included (l to r): Alejandro Hill (Chile), Fernando Ferrada (Chile), Bilinka Livchnousky (Chile), Angela Serrano (México/Colombia), Claudio Lobeto (Argentina), Jacqueline Oliveira (Brazil), and Jorge Lora (México/Perú).*

The seminar was organized by Universidad Bolivariana, Pró-Humana, ASONG, and MIDEPLAN, and was hosted by the UN system organization CEPAL. It drew a strong audience of students as well as professionals of the Chilean NGO community and government sector, and was also joined by the participants of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's International Leaders in Philanthropy Program (LIP).

On the theme of sectoral identity in the LAC region, building a conceptual and analytical framework for the Third Sector that is consistent with the singularity of the continent, and sensitive to the regional differences, proved to be a challenge to be undertaken over the next years through a collective effort of researchers and field practitioners. Operating with a flexible, plural and culturally-sensitive definition of the Third Sector also seems to be a regional necessity in search of its identity.

Unlike the previous meeting of the ISTR-LAC Network, which took place in Rio de Janeiro in April 1998, a large number of papers were presented on the topics of philanthropy and corporate citizenship. Whereas in the former meeting the relationship of the Third Sector with the state was the dominant theme, this attention on philanthropy and corporate citizenship suggests a shift in scholarly attention that reflects broader social changes in the region.

### ISTR and the development of the field of Third Sector research in Latin America and the Caribbean

During the meeting it was noted that, unlike what happens in other regions, in the LAC region research on the Third Sector appears to be led not by universities, but rather by practitioners in the field. In this sense, it was stressed that universities are still cautious about this field, resulting in a lack of academic research, educational programs and qualified Third Sector educators. Nevertheless, an encouraging reversal in this posture can be noted, which, it is

hoped, will lead to a significant increase in the amount and quality of research conducted, as well as to the development of appropriate theoretical frameworks and tools for the Third Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean.

ISTR has supported the creation of a public space to unite Third Sector practice and research through the Regional Network in Latin America and the Caribbean since the international conference in Mexico City (1996). The need to continue this effort and to consistently involve greater numbers of researchers and practitioners from more countries was noted by participants. Toward the closure of the second seminar of the ISTR Latin America and the Caribbean Network it was determined that the path from Santiago towards the Dublin International Conference in July 2000 should be adequately prepared, through the increase of exchange between members of the network.